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NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

**VIOLENCE AND INSTITUTIONALIZATION IN ISLAMIC
ACTIVISM: EXPLAINING MODERATION**

by

Timothy M. Bennett

December 2006

Thesis Advisor:
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**VIOLENCE AND INSTITUTIONALIZATION IN ISLAMIC ACTIVISM:
EXPLAINING MODERATION**

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MASTER OF ARTS IN NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

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ABSTRACT

Over the last few decades, a number of Islamist groups, some listed as terrorist, have increasingly participated in political elections and shown a pattern of moderation. What explains the move away from violence to achieve group goals? Analyzing three cases, Hizbullah in Lebanon, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and Hamas in the occupied Palestinian territories, this thesis examines the causes of moderation and willingness to participate in existing political structures. Using aspects of social movement theory, it is argued that institutionalization and interests of maintaining membership explain why, when political opportunities arise, Islamist groups take the democratic path and forego violence. The conclusions aid in promoting democracy in the region by demonstrating when Islamist groups are willing to participate in formal politics.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	ISLAMISTS AND DEMOCRACY IN THE MIDDLE EAST	1
A.	INTRODUCTION.....	1
B.	DEMOCRACY IN THE MIDDLE EAST.....	2
C.	ISLAMIST MOVEMENTS AND DEMOCRATIC REFORM.....	3
D.	SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORY FRAMEWORK.....	3
E.	LITERATURE REVIEW	8
1.	Survey of Literature and Major Debates.....	8
2.	Major Argument	12
F.	PLAN OF STUDY.....	12
II.	LEBANON AND HIZBULLAH.....	15
A.	INTRODUCTION.....	15
B.	RISE OF HIZBULLAH	16
1.	Hizbullah Formation and Ideology	16
C.	HIZBULLAH - SOCIAL MOBILIZATION AND IDEOLOGY FRAMING	19
1.	Hizbullah - Political Opportunity.....	19
2.	Hizbullah - Mobilization.....	21
3.	Hizbullah - Framing	23
D.	LEBANESE GOVERNMENT, ELECTORAL SYSTEM AND REFORMS.....	26
E.	HIZBULLAH: EXTREMISM, MODERATION AND POLITICAL GAIN	28
1.	Political Gain	28
2.	Hizbullah Support.....	28
3.	Obstacles to Democracy	29
F.	CONCLUSION	30
III.	EGYPT AND THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD.....	33
A.	INTRODUCTION.....	33
B.	RISE OF MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD.....	33
C.	MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD – SOCIAL MOBILIZATION AND IDEOLOGICAL FRAMING	37
1.	Muslim Brotherhood Ideology.....	37
2.	Muslim Brotherhood Mobilization.....	38
3.	Muslim Brotherhood Framing	39
4.	Muslim Brotherhood Political Opportunities in Egypt.....	40
D.	EGYPT’S POLITICAL SYSTEM	41
E.	POLITICAL AND ELECTORAL SYSTEM REFORM	42
F.	MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD: EXTREMISM, MODERATION AND POLITICAL GAIN.....	43
G.	CONCLUSION	45

IV.	PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY AND HAMAS	47
A.	INTRODUCTION.....	47
B.	RISE OF HAMAS.....	47
C.	HAMAS – SOCIAL MOBILIZATION AND FRAMING	48
	1. Political Opportunity	48
	2. Resource Mobilization	49
	3. Framing.....	50
D.	PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY AND GOVERNANCE	51
E.	HAMAS: EXTREMISM, MODERATION, AND POLITICAL GAIN ...	52
F.	CONCLUSION	59
V.	CONCLUSION	61
A.	ISLAMIC ACTIVISM AND THE POTENTIAL FOR CHANGE.....	61
	1. Lebanon and Hizbullah	62
	2. Egypt and the Muslim Brotherhood	63
	3. Palestinian Authority and Hamas	64
B.	ISLAMISTS AND U.S. FOREIGN POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS..	65
C.	AREAS FOR FURTHER INQUIRY	66
	LIST OF REFERENCES	67
	INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST	73

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I. ISLAMISTS AND DEMOCRACY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

A. INTRODUCTION

The United States' global war on terrorism considers the adversary any group or non-state actor which elects to use extreme violence, at times indiscriminately against civilians, to achieve its goals. A number of Islamist groups use or have used such extreme violence to achieve political goals. The United States and others label these groups as terrorist or extremist. The terrorist label carries with it an assumption that all groups who have used or may use extreme measures to achieve their goals, political or other wise, are equal in terms of operation, organization, motivation and membership. Labeling these groups as extremist or terrorist forecloses all possible diplomatic negotiations, a result which may counter foreign policy goals for deterring violence and promoting democracy.

While supporters of the global war on terrorism deem these organizations perennially violent, what explains signs of their moderation or willingness to forego violence and work within existing political structures? Could democratic participation be so attractive to Islamists they eschew non-democratic methods of achieving their goals? Islamic activism refers to collective action, extreme or moderate, using Islamic terms, symbols and identities. Islamic activism can take the form of political movements to establish an Islamic state, opposition against a repressive regime or a social movement to promote stronger adherence to Islam within society.¹ Though these groups are Islamic and their members are predominantly Muslim, not all groups exist to merely conduct extreme or terrorist attacks against a ruling regime, government or society. I suggest a more complex interaction is taking place between the Islamic group, the state, and others who support them. I investigate the moderating potential of groups which have used violence by analyzing the trajectories of Hizbullah in Lebanon, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and Hamas in the occupied Palestinian territories.

¹ Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Introduction," in Quintan Wiktorowicz, ed., *Islamic Activism*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004, 2.

B. DEMOCRACY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The Middle East is thought to have been left behind as periodic waves of democratization swept across the globe. The most recent wave involved the Eastern European countries of the former Soviet Union that seemed to transition almost overnight into democracies. It seemed so easy any country could become a democracy. Historically, however, stable democratic transition has not happened in a rapid manner. Lasting democracy has happened over a long time period through gradual and incremental processes shaped by bottom-up societal pressure and piecemeal reforms.²

Research identifies authoritarian and semi-authoritarian regimes as the main barriers to democracy in the Middle East. These regimes control oil wealth, the coercive use of force, and other means of repression. Many countries in the region were at one time colonized by European states and, when granted independence, transitioned to authoritarian forms of government. The authoritarian regimes were supported by the West and were under no pressure to reform. Pressure from within has taken place, to some extent, and a number of Arab regimes implemented limited reforms during the 1980s. Reforms include the emergence or reemergence of parliaments and other forms of legislative bodies. Such legislatures play an important role in the political environment and serve as a legitimate voice of opposition when given the opportunity.³

Islamist opposition movements, emerging during the last few decades, have also become a force for change. In some cases, Islamist movements act as a strong political force working with, or parallel to, a number of Arab regimes. Moderate and radical Islamist groups continue to demonstrate a willingness to participate in the legislative branch of government when given the opportunity. Islamists attract wide popular support through grassroots civil society institutions which improve social welfare and offer an alternative form of government purportedly free from corruption and Western influence.⁴

² Abdo Baaklini, Guilain Denoeux, and Robert Springborg, *Legislative Politics in the Arab World: The Resurgence of Democratic Institutions*, Boulder CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999, 249.

³ Ibid., 1.

⁴ Nathan J. Brown, Amr Hamzawy, and Marina Ottaway, "Islamist Movements and the Democratic Process in the Arab World: Exploring the Gray Zones," Carnegie Papers, Middle East Series no. 67, Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 2006, 3.

C. ISLAMIST MOVEMENTS AND DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Over the last few decades, a number of Islamist movements have participated in local and national elections. I investigate to what extent this apparent moderation influences the potential for democracy. In doing so, I contribute to the wider body of literature concerning the prospects for democracy in the Middle East. I hypothesize that, when given the opportunity, Islamist groups are somewhat willing to operate within existing state structures, forego violence, and promote democratic processes as a means to advance their goals. To support this hypothesis, I use aspects of social movement theory and political system dynamics to examine the origin, transformation, and future potential for Hizbullah in Lebanon, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and Hamas in Gaza and the West Bank. Specifically, I consider how the goal of sustaining and expanding the movement entailed changing the organization's goals and tactics in light of the new political opportunities. I also examine regime responses to Islamist tactics. A regime may choose to reform the political process creating a more democratic environment or change the electoral system's design to guarantee regime security.

Increased understanding of Islamist groups in general, but specifically those willing to participate in political institutions, could lead to improved prospects for democracy. Islamist influence on the spread of democratic processes may be of vital interest in fostering United States' objectives in the region. For those willing to participate in politics, there is an opportunity for them to become an active and accepted part of the system. In other words, they can be institutionalized and no longer excluded. This institutionalization can bode positively for the development of democratic institutions and signal the group's abandonment of violence.

D. SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORY FRAMEWORK

Social movement theory (SMT) provides a multi-dimensional framework to aid in conceptualizing the interaction of movements and political processes. This analysis can also be applied to groups or organization within a larger social movement like Islamic

activism. Social movement theory focuses on three primary aspects: political opportunities, mobilizing structure or resource mobilization, and framing processes.⁵

Social movements operate within a dynamic political environment. Ziad Munson suggests four aspects of a dynamic political environment include: state repression, political access, divisions among elite and influential allies.⁶ To operate in this dynamic political environment, social movements must repeatedly challenge the power holder (i.e. authoritarian regime) and show that their support base remains “worthy, unified, numerous, and committed.”⁷ Worthy or worthiness characterizes the rationale behind a movements actions or challenge. The majority of supporters must see the challenge as just held up by higher moral standards. Unity refers to a common identity or bond displayed through symbols, rhetoric, or actions like marching together in demonstration. Numerous refers to the size of the movements support base and its ability to substantiate claims of support. The size of a movements support base can be demonstrated through petitions, open public demonstrations, or election results for example. The last characteristic is commitment which is demonstrated through repeated and persistent action. Action could range from public speaking demonstrations to suicide bombings.

Social movements can either avoid or adapt to take advantage of changes within a political environment. An opening in the political environment would allow movements to form a political party or allow members to compete in elections. Participation in the political system may even lead to institutionalization. Once institutionalized the movement becomes part of the system. For Islamic activists, who use extreme violence as part of their repertoire, they likely must forego violence becoming more moderate in order to remain a legitimate part of the system. To reinforce this idea, scholars, suggest

⁵ Doug McAdam, John McCarthy, and Mayer Zald, “Introduction: Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Framing Processes—Toward a Synthetic, Comparative Perspective on Social Movements,” in Doug McAdam, John McCarthy, and Mayer Zald, eds., *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements; Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framing*, New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1990, 2.

⁶ Ziad Munson, “Islamic Mobilization: Social Movement Theory and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood,” *The Sociological Quarterly*, vol. 42, no. 4, 2001, 494.

⁷ Charles Tilly, “Agendas For Students of Social Movements,” in *States, Parties, and Social Movements*, ed., Jack A. Goldstone, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003, 250.

that social movements “are shaped by the broader set of political constraints and opportunities unique to the national context in which they are embedded.”⁸

For a movement to exist and take advantage of political opportunities it must mobilize members and other resources. Mobilizing structures are the means by which groups are built, organized, and supported. Mobilizing structures are the “collective vehicles, informal as well as formal, through which people mobilize and engage in collective action”⁹ Examples of mobilizing structures that may be exploited for collective action purposes are mosques, educational institutions, and existing social networks. Collective action however, comes at a price. Costs of collective action include time, incentives, money, and the willingness to risk repression from leaders and regimes which control the operating environment.¹⁰

Collective action can not take place without human resources. People must be recruited and retained to maintain an effective movement. Mobilization literature contains two theories of recruitment, which use different assumptions to understand the motives that drive collective action. The first theory, based on the rational actor model of human behavior, contends that movements attract new members by appealing to individual interests through incentives--material, psychological, and/or emotional benefits that are contingent upon participation. The weakness in this recruitment theory is that it provides no insight as to why members stay committed to the movement. The second recruitment theory suggests individuals join to demonstrate commitment to a belief or cause that is in the mind of the individual greater than one’s self.¹¹ Under the second theory, movement leaders can mobilize individuals into action by “issuing a ‘call to arms’ or normative rationale for collective action—a process described by Robert Benford and David Snow as ‘motivational framing’.”¹² The motivational framing for Islamic activists then, by this line of thought, comes from Islam.

⁸ McAdam et al, 3.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Jennifer Chandler, “The Explanatory Value of Social Movement Theory,” *Strategic Insights*, vol. 4, no. 5, May 2005, 3.

¹¹ Carrie Wickham, “Interests, Ideas, and Islamist Outreach in Egypt,” in *Islamic Activism*, ed. Quintan Wiktorowicz, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004, 231-232.

¹² Ibid.

A number of Islamic activist groups have been studied; resulting in some general observable trends across groups. In particular to explain how these organizations make contact to recruit members, Carrie Wickham's research on Islamic activism in Egypt provides an explanation. She found that "the presence of Islamist networks at the local level where people lived, studied, and worked made them highly accessible and minimized the social distance between participants and non-participants."¹³ Daily personal contact facilitated the decision to join the group.

Becoming a member of an Islamist activity does not always require a member to sever prior social ties, thus minimizing disruption to existing social ties and maintains an opening to reach other potential recruits.¹⁴ In addition to having relative freedom to join, the newly formed social ties offered by an Islamic network allows a certain amount of flexibility in commitment. Joining without the demand for absolute commitment allows members to experiment with different levels of participation while keeping existing social ties with non-activists.

The low-level commitment to join an Islamist movement explains initial involvement in low-risk forms of activism; however, it does not explain how deeper organizational commitment is formed and with it the willingness to participate in extremely high risk political forms of activism like suicide bombing. "To facilitate a progression toward high-risk activism, Islamists frame activism as a moral 'obligation' that demands self-sacrifice and unflinching commitment to the cause of religious transformation."¹⁵ The moral obligation or religious duty allows individuals to internalize the goals of the organization.

Framing is the internalizing mechanism that takes a social movement and makes it personal for its members. A more elaborate definition of framing is: "conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understanding of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action."¹⁶ Through this process members have a personal bond, shared belief or identity that motivates collective

¹³ Wickham, 233.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 232.

¹⁶ McAdam et al., 6.

action.¹⁷ Common frames associated with social movements include a sense of injustice and conflict within a religious ideology. In the case of injustice, what motivates people is not only the fact that they see and define their situation as unjust but also that they see the opportunity for change.¹⁸ The transition process from idea to movement, in this case, is referred to as “adopting an injustice frame” or when people come to the conclusion that something in their environment violates their moral standards—“of what is right, just, fair—that they must engage in collective action to correct it.”¹⁹ To determine that your moral standards have been violated one must possess a set of fundamental moral standards which can be violated. For a movement to take place versus just a personal sense of being wronged the set of moral standards must be common among others in the same environment.²⁰

Religion can provide the fundamental set of moral standards for the individual and the group which seeks to mobilize. Religion, therefore, is a powerful framing tool for social mobilization. “Religion not only can help to generate and define the grievances that breed disruptive collective activism, it can also supply the symbolic and emotional resources needed to sustain the activism over time.”²¹ Social movements need symbols, rituals, and narratives to create collective identities, build solidarity, express grievances, and draw inspiration and strength in difficult times. In this sense, religion a custodian of “powerful symbols, rituals, icons, narratives, songs, testimonies, and oratory” lends itself well to the causes of activism.²²

Framing does not have to be as complex as religion. It can be a simple slogan as in TV commercials, bumper stickers, or car magnets. One in particular is the yellow ribbon car magnet “Support Our Troops”. This arouses mental images of the September 11, 2001 attack, invasion of Afghanistan to stop the Taliban and Al-Qaeda, sending forces to Baghdad to stop Saddam Hussein, or a reminder that sons, daughters,

¹⁷ McAdam et al, 5.

¹⁸ Christian Smith, “Correcting a Curious Neglect, or Bringing Religion Back In,” in *Disruptive Religion*, ed. Christian Smith, New York: Routledge, 1996, 10.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 10-11.

²² Ibid., 11.

and friends are fighting for democracy and freedom. The purpose is to rally support for the cause and keep it fresh or persistent in the minds of its members and potential members. In this manner framing plays a key role in recruitment and retention of members.²³

For an Islamist movement, a means of establishing a frame to mobilize around is the issuing of a *fatwa* (Islamic legal opinion). A *fatwa* can provide rationale for action and/or direct actions which must be carried out to fulfill the goals of the group. Usama Bin Laden's *fatwa* calling for *jihad* is a good example.

E. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Survey of Literature and Major Debates

A debate exists among scholars and experts as to whether Islamist groups are irrational terrorists or rational actors who use extreme measures at times to achieve rational goals. Much of the academic literature suggests these organizations are in fact well organized and rational. Actions by more radical Islamist groups such as *Gamma al-Islamiyya* in Egypt failed to force lasting political change. Their actions could not overcome responses in the form of regime brutality and in some instances public backlash.²⁴ As a result, a number of Islamist movements have become less violent, embraced pragmatism and democratic procedures to generate public support and lasting political change.

Some Islamist movements in Morocco, Algeria, Yemen, Jordan, Kuwait, and Egypt--the Muslim Brotherhood specifically--see the benefit in peacefully seeking political power and working within the existing political system to promote gradual democratic transformation instead of insisting on a theocratic state.²⁵ These same Islamists feel, to some extent, that Islam is compatible with democratic principles, rule of law, and human rights. Islamists may never accept the term secular but their actions parallel the notion when they refer to the civility of the public sphere. No matter what the rhetoric, one fundamental issue remains constant - the insistence that Islam must guide all

²³ Wickham, 232.

²⁴ Ray Takeyh, "Faith-Based Initiatives: Can Islam Bring democracy to the Middle East?," *Foreign Policy*, no. 127, November-December 2001, 68.

²⁵ Amr Hamzawy, "The Key to Arab Reform: Moderate Islamists," Policy Brief no. 40, Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, August 2005, 1.

actions. Emphasis on Islam promotes a distinctive religion-based political perception and sustains to a great extent the popular appeal of Islamists in the region.²⁶

Although popular appeal for Islamism is significant, it is the opportunity to participate in the political system that encourages moderation. Much literature supports this idea and specifically identifies Islamists' inclusion in the political sphere as a key step in the process. Inclusion in the political sphere offers the ability to realize the challenges of managing contemporary society and provides Islamists the opportunity to address socio-cultural issues. Political participation, which furthers pragmatism and promotes democratic reform, has become a central component of the Islamist agenda.²⁷

As the political reform process moves forward, authoritarian regimes may question their ability to remain in control of the system. In fact, some regimes have pulled back or constrained political opportunities in order to reaffirm their power. A restriction of nonviolent or moderate Islamists from the political sphere may only serve to roll back progress, empower more radical forces and hinder any chance for democratic transformation.²⁸ Authoritarian regimes are forced to balance control and political opportunity to remain in power. A wrong decision or bad timing may cause results similar to the Iranian Revolution with the removal of the Shah of Iran. Regimes could be overthrown if they delay political reform; however they risk being voted out of power if they reform too quickly.²⁹

Amr Hamzawy, an Egyptian political scientist with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, encourages the United States and Europe to seek an alliance with moderate Islamists but also warns against cooperation with more extreme groups like Hamas and Hizbullah. He suggests Hamas and Hizbullah are an interesting contrast to moderate Islamists. Hamas and Hizbullah are known for their militant resistance but they also have political branches within their organizations. These groups have demonstrated a capacity to transform and adhere to the rules of the political game in their respective states. This contradicts the thesis that Islamists are incapable of rational nonviolent acts, a

²⁶ Hamzawy, 2.

²⁷ Ibid., 3.

²⁸ Ibid., 5.

²⁹ John L. Esposito and John O. Voll, *Islam and Democracy*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996, 3.

thesis which inhibits democratic liberalization. Since 1992, Hizbullah has put forth candidates for the Lebanese parliament. Hamas, in 2005, won a victory in the Palestinian municipal elections gaining overwhelming support in Gaza and considerable support in the West Bank. Unlike moderate Islamists, like the Muslim Brotherhood, these groups have not completely sworn off the use of violence. Hamzawy warns that the eagerness of Islamist groups to be active participants in the political process should be met with cautious optimism. Various Islamist groups may truly support a democratic process while others may only be using the process to seize political power.

Scholars and policymakers try to distinguish between radical (or extremist) and moderate Islamism, though it is difficult to define moderate. One leading scholar suggests “[m]oderation denotes those Islamic groups and activists who formally declare their respect for, and commitment to, pluralism and democratic principle and renounce the use of violence in achieving their objectives.”³⁰ For the purpose of this research, moderate is defined as the willingness to pursue peaceful means like political participation to achieve organizational goals. The moderate-radical spectrum does not address the concern that seemingly moderate groups may in fact be hiding their radical agenda to gain a position of authority and shed the cloak of democracy. The phrase “one person, one vote, one time” expresses the fear that Islamists, once elected, would not relinquish political control through democratic means.

Sivan points out that some Islamists maintain the argument that democracy and Islam are compatible based on the principle of *shura* (consultation to elect a leader or caliph). Others disagree with this argument on the grounds it is not historically accurate. He also points out that *shura* has never truly been implemented, even during the Golden Age of Islam. *Shura* during this period was limited to a select group of elites or learned ones. Opposition to *shura*-based democracy suggests what is needed is to open the gate to *ijtihad*, or individual interpretation, to develop or combine the notion of *shura* with modern pluralistic values.³¹

³⁰ Jillian Schwedler, “A Paradox of Democracy? Islamist Participation in Elections,” *Middle East Report*, Winter 1998, 27.

³¹ Emmanuel Sivan, “Why Radical Muslims Aren’t Taking Over Governments” in Barry Rubin, ed., *Revolutionaries and Reformers*, Albany NY: SUNY Press, 2003, 8.

In countries where the government chooses heavy-handed repression to deal with mainstream Islamist movements, the movement's internal reformers lose out. The influence of the reformers within the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood has increased when the government has allowed some political participation and decreased when the government became more repressive strengthening the movement's hard-liners. Therefore, increased political opportunity and an open political system may encourage Islamic activist groups to change even further.³²

The potential for change towards democracy seems favorable according to a *Pew Global Attitudes Project* survey. The survey results indicate people surveyed in predominantly Muslim countries are not opposed to aspects of democracy and see Islam beginning to have a greater influence on state politics. However, those surveyed did express a cautious concern about Islamic extremists gaining greater political control.³³ An interesting result of the survey was that in predominantly Muslim countries those surveyed believe that democracy is possible. Those surveyed in Morocco (83%), Lebanon (83%), Jordan (80%), Turkey (48%) and Pakistan (43%) feel democracy can work in their country and is not a form of government reserved for the West. Democracy and what constitutes a democratic environment can be defined in various ways. For this research, I accept Robert Dahl's minimalist definition of democracy common in academic literature. Dahl's definition emphasizes human rights, open society, and a representative government.³⁴ As stated above, there is some concern about the increasing role of Islam in government. A significant number in each of the predominantly Muslim countries surveyed, except for Jordan, felt Islamic extremism may pose a threat in their countries.³⁵

³² Brown, Hamzawy, and Ottaway, 19.

³³ Pew Research, "Islamic Extremism: Common Concern for Muslim and Western Publics," *Pew Global Attitudes Project*, July 14, 2005, <www.pewglobal.org/reports/>, 1.

³⁴ Robert Dahl suggests a democratic government includes: (1) representative decision makers elected by the people; (2) representatives or elected officials selected through frequent, fair, and open elections free of coercion; (3) freedom of expression for citizens without fear of repression from government or ideological groups; (4) access to alternative and/or independent sources of information and media; (5) the right to form parties, associations, or other autonomous organizations; (6) equal rights which include the right to vote, compete for and hold political office, and ability to pursue opportunities available to other citizens. Robert Dahl, *On Democracy*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998, 85-86.

³⁵ Pew Research, 2.

2. Major Argument

What explains the willingness of Islamist groups, like the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, Hizbullah, and Hamas, to moderate and become active participants in state political systems? When regimes choose to allow Islamists into electoral politics, for whatever reason, the groups often seize the opportunity. I argue that this change in tactic is due to Islamists' institutionalization within society and the need to maintain a strong support base.

F. PLAN OF STUDY

This thesis investigates to what extent Hizbullah in Lebanon, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and Hamas in the occupied territories have become less violent while pursuing more democratic means. These groups in some ways act more like political parties promoting a democratic political environment in their country. Social movement theory provides a framework to better understand how these groups have achieved their goals and sustained their movement over time. Efforts to sustain and expand have to some extent altered organizational goals and tactics as well as the regime environment in which they operate. The thesis focuses on how Islamist tactics change to take advantage of political opportunities.

Chapter II presents the case of Hizbullah in Lebanon. Hizbullah, since the end of the Lebanese civil war, has taken steps to transform into a political movement yet retain a substantial military capability. Hizbullah demonstrates a willingness to work within the Lebanese system promoting democratic principles and government reform in order to advance its goals and maintain support. The external security threat from Israel which gave rise to Hizbullah remains an obstacle to its disarmament. The extent to which Hizbullah will transform beyond its current state depends upon this on-going external conflict. In the event Israel and Lebanon remain mobilized for war, Hizbullah's increasing democratic character will be stunted.

Chapter III presents the case of Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. The Brotherhood has experienced a transition from nonviolence to violence and back to nonviolence again. Since 1981, the Brotherhood has adhered to nonviolent means to pursue its goals. The group's willingness to participate in Egypt's political process suggests there is an opportunity to become institutionalized into the political system. The Mubarak regime

limits political opportunity and the Muslim Brotherhood is not allowed to participate as an officially recognized political party. Regime constraints have not seemed to hamper the Muslim Brotherhood's ability to gain seats in parliament. Brotherhood success in parliamentary elections should signal the regime that the potential for political change or unrest may be on the horizon. For the moment, further democratic advancement in Egypt resides in the hands of the Mubarak regime.

Chapter IV looks at the case of Hamas in Gaza and the West Bank. The SMT framework assisted in understanding the political opportunities, mobilizing structures and framing processes used by Hamas to gain power. Results indicate it is too soon to tell to what extent Hamas is willing to further moderate. Ongoing conflict with Israel and Hamas' hard-line stance is likely to prevent diplomatic negotiations. Hamas' ability to gain a controlling majority in parliament has however, significantly changed the political landscape and brought an end to Fatah's political monopoly. While Hamas may not become entirely nonviolent, its contribution to democratic transition is likely to be a lasting one, promoting the idea of elections and popular sovereignty within Palestinian society.

Chapter V builds upon the evidence presented throughout the thesis and clarifies to what extent and under what conditions Islamic activist groups are likely to adopt non-violent means to achieve their goals. In addition, this chapter summarizes the impact of political system dynamics in promoting or preventing democracy. Lastly, the chapter suggests changes to United States foreign policy related to Islamist movements and recommends areas where further research is needed.

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II. LEBANON AND HIZBULLAH

A. INTRODUCTION

Since the end of the Lebanese civil war, Hizbullah has actively provided social programs as well as participated in local and national government. Hizbullah increased its political participation in order to maintain its support base. In essence, Hizbullah transformed itself into a political movement with a militant component. Hizbullah suggests a willingness to disarm when and if the Lebanese government can provide security for all Lebanon. However, on-going conflict between Israel and Lebanon provides justification for a Hizbullah deterrent force. Still, Hizbullah appears likely to continue promoting democratic processes within Lebanon albeit hindered by its unwillingness to disarm. This may prevent a deeper democratic transition.

Why and to what extent has Hizbullah changed tactics? In the 1980s and 1990s, Hizbullah was one of the most feared Islamist groups. The name brings images of an attack on the United States Marine Corps barracks in Beirut, airplane hijackings, and hostage taking. This view differs from the one many Lebanese hold. Has Hizbullah become just another political party in the Lebanese government? The alternative is that Hizbullah is merely laying low after the events of September 11, 2001 and will reemerge as a violent actor at a suitable moment in time. This chapter seeks to answers those questions and in doing so provide a better understanding of the extent to which Hizbullah has become more moderate. Facts on the ground indicate Hizbullah has been successful in achieving its stated objectives. Objectives include creating better social conditions for Shi'ites and deterring Israeli aggression. Hizbullah remains resilient and continues to endure verbal onslaught from its opponents.³⁶ Harb and Leenders suggest strictly labeling Hizbullah a terrorist group or a political party is misleading and does not do justice to the organization's complexity. Hizbullah has carefully adapted over the past two decades operating as a holistic and integrated network. Its actions and rhetoric are wrapped in an interrelated religious and political framework.³⁷

³⁶ Mona Harb and Reinoud Leenders, "Know thy Enemy: Hizbullah, Terrorism and the Politics of Perception," *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 26, no. 1, 2005, 174.

³⁷ Ibid.

B. RISE OF HIZBULLAH

1. Hizbullah Formation and Ideology

Hizbullah or “the Party of God” had a profound impact on the Islamic world when it emerged between 1982 and 1985. This group of Lebanese Shi’ite Muslims gained fame as a result of its use of violence to include: suicide bombings, airliner hijackings, hostage taking and its confrontation with Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). Hizbullah was an encouragement to other Islamic activist groups as it engaged the IDF occupying southern Lebanon forcing an initial retreat and later complete withdrawal.³⁸ Israeli troop withdrawal was significant because it made Hizbullah the first group to wage a successful insurgency against the IDF. Also significant was its ability to achieve this feat so quickly after becoming a movement.

Hizbullah emerged due to a combination of domestic and international factors. Domestically, conditions for Shi’ite political activism were building since Lebanon gained independence. Shi’ite activism really took form in the 1960s due to the leadership of Imam Musa al-Sadr. Al-Sadr, backed by Iran, established a number of charitable institutions and created the Higher Shi’ite Islamic Council. This council, led by al-Sadr, not only focused on the local concerns of the Shi’ite community but also provided them a voice at the state level. Not satisfied with the Lebanese political system, al-Sadr next established the Movement of the Disinherited (*harakat al-mahrumin*) in 1974 to address issues of reform. While the Movement of the Disinherited was a Shi’ite political movement, it called for government reform and social justice for all Lebanese. Outbreak of civil war in 1975 changed the domestic environment. Civil war reinforced sectarian division and brought about various armed militia groups. Al-Sadr’s movement developed its own militia wing known as Amal. In 1978, al-Sadr disappeared while on a trip to Libya. After al-Sadr’s disappearance, Amal became increasingly secular. As a result, a group of Islamic clerics led by Hussein Musawi broke away and formed their own Islamic movement. This splinter group, guided by clerics trained in Najaf with Ayatollah Khomeini, was responsible for the later formation of Hizbullah.³⁹

³⁸ Glenn E. Robinson, “ Hamas as Social Movement,” in *Islamic Activism*, ed. Quintan Wiktorowicz, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004, 125.

³⁹ Judith Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2005, 22-23.

In addition to domestic factors, international influence from Syria and Iran on the Shi'ite community played a role in the rise of Hizbullah. As the war progressed, Syria aligned its support with the Muslim community and Iran to be in a position to regain the Golan Heights, lost to Israel in the 1967 war. Syria also sought to maintain an influence in Lebanon's future government. Iran supported the Shi'ites in order to expand its political influence and further its goals of removing Israel and western influence in the region. Syria provided security and Iran provided funds necessary to mobilize and train Hizbullah fighters. The conflict between Israeli and Palestinian fighters in southern Lebanon, followed by civil war, took a toll on the Shi'ite community. Many Shi'ites were forced to relocate to Beirut after losing their homes and jobs. Iran's funding of Hizbullah provided young unemployed men with the means to provide for their families thus increasing the incentive to join.⁴⁰

Beyond funding, Iran played a large role in shaping Hizbullah's ideology. The success of the Iranian Revolution in 1979 caused a demonstration effect for Islamic activism (Shi'ite and Sunni) across the Middle East. Iran found Shi'ites in Lebanon responsive to its Islamic revolutionary message. According to Hamzeh, Lebanese Shi'ite ideology dates back prior to the Iranian Revolution when meetings or circles of learning (*al-hawzat al-ilmiyyah*) between Shi'ite clergy from Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon took place. The *hawzet* laid the foundation for commonalities in ideology, and built a network of kinship, personal friendship, and politico-religious structures. A number of men involved in these *hawzats* had a significant influence on Shi'ite ideologies--Ayatollahs Ruhallah Khomeini, Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, cousin of Musa al-Sadr, and mullah Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah.⁴¹

After the disappearance of Imam Musa al-Sadr in 1978, the Lebanese militant sheikhs turned to Khomeini for guidance and leadership.⁴² When Ayatollah Khomeini came to power in 1979 he became the leader of Shi'ites both inside and outside Iran. Hizbullah's guiding ideology is patterned after the ideology of Ayatollah Ruhallah

⁴⁰ Harik, 38-40.

⁴¹ Demonstration effect occurs when an event in one place acts as a catalyst or trigger for like events in another place at approximately the same point in time. Ahmad Nizar Hamzeh, *In the Path of Hizbullah*, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2004, 18.

⁴² Ahmad Hamzeh, *In the Path of Hizbullah*, Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2004, 19.

Khomeini and enhanced by its own themes and ideologues: Seyyed Mohammad Fadlallah, Seyyed Hasan Nasrallah and Sheikh Na'im Qasim. Ahmed Hamzeh highlights an interesting point in that while Fadlallah initially contributed to Hizbullah's ideology he disagreed with the acceptance of Khomeini's *marja'yyah* (framework or reference) as supreme *marji* (leader) in 1989.⁴³ As a result, Fadlallah's influence upon Hizbullah's rank and file was marginalized.

The Khomeini ideology of *wilayat al-faqih* (jurisconsult) is a distinct Shi'ite political, legal, and religious doctrine which contains a "salvation prescription of primordial values, beliefs, and practices that are to shape the actions and the future of the intended Islamic order, as interpreted and mandated by the jurisconsult."⁴⁴ This doctrine calls for the "necessity of an Islamic order, rooted in a restored theory of guardianship of the jurisconsult (*wilayat al-faqih*), in which the Islamic masses bear the banner of holy struggle (*jihad*) against local and foreign oppressors and for the liberation of Jerusalem and the spread of social justice."⁴⁵

Today, Hizbullah's internal organization combines political and military structures guided by the *wilayat al-faqih* doctrine.⁴⁶ Hizbullah's hierarchal structure accommodates consensus, control and flexibility in choosing what type of action is required whether it be militant, political, or both for a given situation.⁴⁷ The secrecy behind Hizbullah makes it difficult to gain a clear understanding of its intricate workings however, Ahmad Hamzeh and Judith Palmer Harik extensively studied the movement and their research forms the basis for my research in applying a social movement theory framework to the Hizbullah case study.

⁴³ Hamzeh, 27.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 27-28.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 78.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 79.

C. HIZBULLAH - SOCIAL MOBILIZATION AND IDEOLOGY FRAMING

1. Hizbullah - Political Opportunity

From inception, Hizbullah was a political social movement. Its rationale for violence was politically motivated.⁴⁸ This is different from other Islamic movements calling people to return to a stricter form of Islam and individual piety. Instead of turning inward, Hizbullah emphasized outward political action. Its initial political objective was to remove Israeli troops from Lebanon. According to Hamzeh, observers, analysts, and Lebanese in general tend to “regard Hizbullah as a conventional political party or a group turned from a terrorist movement into a political party.”⁴⁹ Hizbullah defines itself as both a “struggle movement of faithful Lebanese who believe in Islam, resistance, and liberation of the land” and a prominent political party representing mostly Shi’ites in Lebanon.⁵⁰ Hizbullah members currently hold 12 of 128 seats in the Lebanese parliament but its opportunity to participate within the political system took time.

Islamic activism literature suggests societal divisions within Lebanon motivated the Shi’ites to mobilize.⁵¹ Shi’ites experienced a lower standard of living in Lebanon compared to other societal groups which led to their desire to become more politically active.⁵² Lack of government services provided an opportunity for Hizbullah to fill the void and establish a significant presence in many areas including districts of Beirut.⁵³ Even today, Hizbullah continues to provide medical clinics and other services when the government can not or will not. This allows Hizbullah to maintain, as well as expand, its membership and support base.

Hizbullah over the last few decades has taken advantage of opportunities to participate in Lebanon’s political system. Older research indicated Hizbullah’s participation in government was to establish an “Iranian-style Islamic state in Lebanon and that all its actions are instrumental to this ultimate goal.” This notion is short-sided

⁴⁸ Martin Kramer, “*Hizbullah: The Calculus of Jihad*,” www.martinkramer.org (accessed 15 February 2006), 11.

⁴⁹ Hamzeh, 44.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Judith Palmer Harik, “Between Islam and the System,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 40, no. 1, March 1996, 46.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

and limits the ability to fully understand Hizbullah's transformation over time.⁵⁴ Its 1985 manifesto or 'open letter' "called for the establishment of an Islamic state in Lebanon and rejected participation in Lebanon's confessional system."⁵⁵ Establishing an Islamic state may no longer be an immediate goal. Hizbullah's leadership "still contends that an Islamic state is a goal that deserves to be aspired to when conditions allow and depending on the emergence of a consensus on its desirability."⁵⁶ Since Hizbullah began participating in Lebanon's post-civil war politics, the organization has not included establishing an Islamic state in its campaign platform. In addition, members elected to parliament or local government have not sponsored legislation calling for an Islamic state.⁵⁷

In addition to participating in governance, Hizbullah began a public relations campaign to modify its image. Hizbullah has gone to great efforts to throw off the label of terrorist organization that the United States and its allies have placed on it. Following the September 11, 2001 attacks, Hizbullah denied connections with Al-Qaeda and openly condemned the group's actions. Hizbullah further denied involvement in running Palestinian terrorist training camps and sending members to support the insurgency in Iraq. Harb and Leenders suggest, Hizbullah's actions indicate a sense of pressure or concern that a potential danger exists in being included in the United States' war on terrorism.⁵⁸

While these actions generate cautious optimism in the West, Hizbullah has made it clear that it has not given up the fight for what it believes in. Avoiding the terrorist label, may constrain or limit its ability to freely take action as it sees fit. While distancing itself from Al-Qaeda, it took the opportunity to remind the world it is alive and well. For example, in May 2004 during the United States' military operations in Najaf, Iraq, Hizbullah's Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah told thousands of protestors in Beirut that "Hizbullah's battle against Israeli occupation and Iraqis resisting the United States

⁵⁴ Harb and Leenders, 179.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Harb and Leenders, 179.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 180

occupation were intrinsically linked and part of the larger battle against United States and Israeli designs for the region.”⁵⁹

2. Hizbullah - Mobilization

Tied closely with political opportunity is the ability for a movement to mobilize. Movements need resources and a community to promote its ideology and show support for its activities. A community provides participants, funds, and other resources for the movement to succeed. Movements can also benefit from a preexisting institutional base like a government regime or religious institution. These institutions provide shelter, space to operate, and material supplies. At a minimum, they need space to operate freely in civil society. Hizbullah’s ability to establish clinics to meet the societal needs is an example. Mobilization also encompasses the actions which a movement undertakes, like suicide bombing, and the mechanisms to sustain and support the movement.

Following the civil war, Syrian occupation and control of Lebanon allowed Hizbullah to remain a significant deterrent force in the established security zone. Syrian interest in the region included the ability to deter Israeli aggression. Hizbullah effectively served that purpose. Hizbullah continued as a resistance force while taking on a more political role to address Shi’ite issues.

A key aspect of maintaining the ability to mobilize is to conduct ongoing recruitment. There are two ways in which individuals can become a member of Hizbullah - horizontal or vertical method.⁶⁰ The vertical method is to enter through the party’s regional reinforcement and recruiting section. This is a two stage transformation process before becoming a full fledged party member. The first stage, reinforcement (*ta’bia*) is a year long program in which new recruits are taught Hizbullah’s ideology and culture. Specifically, it prepares members to follow the Islamic text as interpreted by Hizbullah’s *marji’yyah* (religious authority). In addition, recruits learn to accept the commands of the party’s leadership and the potential for martyrdom. New recruits must demonstrate commitment, endurance, and loyalty to the party. Final acceptance is determined by the party’s security section which keeps a record of all members before and after joining.

⁵⁹ Harb and Leenders, 180.

⁶⁰ Hamzeh, 75-76.

Once a member is approved by the security section they may proceed to stage two. Stage two of the vertical method is called *intizam* (ordered discipline). This stage is also a year long process learning the party's discipline. Members are assigned tasks and undergo physical and military training. This stage will determine individual strengths and what role or position the individual will be selected for. Those with exceptional military abilities will be fighters others will be assigned to political and security units within the party.

The alternative and exceptional means of joining is the horizontal method. This method allows for direct recruitment and assignment of members, with specialized skills, into the party's intermediate level. A member who enters by this path must also demonstrate religious faith and support for Hizbullah's cause. This demonstration of faith is confirmed by a letter of recommendation from a Hizbullah cleric or other ulama based on trust. Few individuals enter by this path and they must also be approved by the security section before becoming members. Once approved these members are assigned to an Executive Council division (i.e. social, political, financial, or education division). Members, who join via the horizontal method, include medical doctors, engineers, university professors, and graduate students who specialize in computers or media for example.

Another form of "membership" comes at a much lower risk. This type of mobilized support for Hizbullah is called *al-Tayyar al-Islami* (Islamic Current). The Islamic Current is the group of supporters that, while not official members, share many of the "ideas and activities of Hizbullah."⁶¹ The Islamic Current includes Shi'ite constituents and a number of Sunni Islamist groups and movements.⁶² Groups include Hamas, Jihad of Palestine, and the Islamic Association of Lebanon.

The Islamic Current also consists of a number of umbrella organizations including the Assembly of Muslim Clergy, a Sunni and Shi'ite clergy coalition to bridge differences in jurisprudence, and the Lebanese Resistance Brigades, a group of Islamists and non-Islamists, whose interest is in fighting Israel. Hizbullah maintains a separation between its internal Islamic Resistance fighters and the Lebanese Resistance Brigades.

⁶¹ Hamzeh, 77.

⁶² Ibid., 78.

Being a fighter in the brigades does not make one a fighter in the Hizbullah internal unit. Hamzeh explains “the separation was intended to prevent any penetration of the Islamic Resistance through membership in the brigades.”⁶³

As we see in other Islamic groups, membership can have various levels and risks. For those members who are skilled, committed and willing to die for the cause of Hizbullah, the opportunity to excel to the status of fighter is a possibility. For others who wish to participate within the organization at the political or societal level that is also a possibility. The Islamic Current requires the least commitment and offers the lowest risk option.

Hizbullah’s organizational structure combines “religious, political, and militaristic units and mechanisms” to mobilize its base of support.⁶⁴ In May 2003, Harb and Leenders interviewed members of Hizbullah who admitted the “party was lying low.”⁶⁵ The events of September 11, 2001 may have in fact helped Hizbullah gain political ground and strengthen its membership. Harb and Leenders suggest the United States’ labeling Hizbullah as a terrorist organization further promoted Hizbullah’s identity as a resistance movement. The attacks allowed Hizbullah to criticize the actions of Al-Qaeda while at the same time reinforce its goals of improving Shi’ite conditions in Lebanon and removing Israeli occupation in Palestine.

In effect, Hizbullah can continue to mobilize its supporters and take actions within certain bounds to prevent immediate retaliation from the United States or its allies.⁶⁶ Hizbullah seems to support Wickham’s second theory of mobilization which suggests movements gain support by focusing on deeply held commitments, values, and beliefs as opposed to narrow self-interest.⁶⁷

3. Hizbullah - Framing

A way to maintain support is through framing organizational goals in a manner that resonates with its constituents. Framing plays a key role in any social movement. For

⁶³ Hamzeh, 78.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Harb and Leenders, 177.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 180.

⁶⁷ Wickham, 232.

Hizbullah framing may be the most vital aspect of its activities to sustain momentum and membership. Two individuals are responsible for much of Hizbullah's ability to frame its message in a way that resonates with its constituents and the global Muslim community. The first individual is Shi'ite cleric Ayatollah Seyyed Fadlallah, Hizbullah's "Spiritual Guide", and the second is Hizbullah's Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah.⁶⁸

Judith Palmer Harik suggests Ayatollah Fadlallah has a natural ability to present Hizbullah's position and goals in a way that all Lebanese, Muslims and Christians, can understand and support.⁶⁹ For example, after the 1983 suicide attack against American and French forces in Beirut, Fadlallah justified the acts as a defensive action in accordance with religious legal measures for the sole purpose of removing foreign occupiers.

Hizbullah's Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah is also a skilled speaker and politician. His skills are demonstrated through his ability to frame an issue to accommodate a specific target audience. Harik presents an example of how Nasrallah frames jihad against Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands. When speaking to a gathering of Shi'ites, Nasrallah presents jihad in a purely religious context. Jihad is presented as a sacred religious duty that must be put above all else with the goal being to liberate all Muslim lands including the holy city of Jerusalem. A nationalistic frame is used when addressing a wider Lebanese audience of mixed faith, Nasrallah presents jihad as a "patriotic duty to liberate the homeland and drive the Israelis out of Lebanon." By using this frame Hizbullah represents the Lebanese people. Hizbullah draws on nationalistic feelings and makes the battle a national responsibility to resist Israeli occupation not only of Lebanon, which ended in 2000, but also the on-going occupation of Palestinian land.⁷⁰

A third frame of reference is used when the target audience is more responsive to an Arab nationalist context. Nasrallah by presenting an issue in this manner expands the base of support to all Arabs. The "struggle against Israel is promoted with reference to the harmful inroads of the West in the region as an effort to stand up to and defeat America's imperialistic designs." According to Harik, this frame portrays Israel as the

⁶⁸ Judith Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, London, NY: I.B. Tauris, 2005, 69-70.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 70.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 71.

“American lackey or agent that must be resisted by the spearhead of the Arab nation—Hizbullah.” A final example of Nasrallah’s skill in framing jihad is when he addresses an international audience. Through the global reach of Hizbullah’s international television channel, al-Manar, he presents the Israeli occupation as an international issue. Nasrallah frames jihad as a “recognized right enjoyed by all people whose countries are illegally occupied” and declares Israelis as “violators of international accords.”⁷¹

Hizbullah’s “mission and identity are rooted in its founders’ belief that the Israeli invasion of Lebanese territory in the 1980s ought to be beaten by armed resistance. Even following the low-intensity war in the 1990s and the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon in May 2000, the notion of resistance has remained central to Hizbullah’s self proclaimed mission.”⁷² While many of Hizbullah’s goals are against Israel, alternative goals are to improve conditions for Shi’ites in Lebanon and resist Western influence.

Hizbullah has used oppression as a central element to frame the Muslim experience under Western influence.⁷³ “Colonialism and imperialism are singled out as the major constants of how countries like France, Britain, and more recently, the United States have trampled on the Muslims” and approached them with “contempt, double standards and brutal force in order to impose their hegemony.”⁷⁴ According to the party’s ideologues, battles over subjugation have been reinforced by a clash between Islamic and Western civilization.⁷⁵ The West, America in particular, can be framed as the embodiment of evil and injustice for supporting Israelis over Palestinians, launching attacks that killed civilians in Afghanistan, and the recent invasion of Iraq.

Hizbullah’s frames are rooted in an ideology that promises Islamic order and creates a just society that cannot be achieved through secular Western forms of government and development. “Accordingly, Hizbullah leaders such as Nasrallah, Qasim, Yazbak, and others tell Muslims, ‘Only God’s just society aims at social justice’.”⁷⁶ Shi’ite practice of “*ijtihad* (authoritative interpretation of Islamic law) provides not only a

⁷¹ Harik, 2005., 71-72.

⁷² Harb and Leenders, 180.

⁷³ Ibid., 181.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Hamzeh, 42.

potential source for Islamic legislation but flexibility in the face of changing political circumstances.”⁷⁷

Hizbullah’s ability to adapt its framing over the past two decades produce sets of meanings embedded in a religious and political framework.⁷⁸ Having a religious and political framework founded in *wilayat al-faqih* allows its leadership to elaborate, mold, and alter the party’s ideological components—establishing Islamic order, waging jihad, fostering Islamic unity, and creating social justice.⁷⁹ Hizbullah’s ability to skillfully frame its position adds to the difficulty of determining if its primary intent is to become less violent.

Hizbullah appears to have mastered the art of framing in order to maintain organizational support and play a strategic role in the Lebanese political system. At one extreme Hizbullah states: “‘Our slogan is and remains death to America’, Hizbullah’s secretary-general Hassan Nasrallah told to a cheering crowd of supporters in a Beirut suburb in April 2003.”⁸⁰ In another situation, Hizbullah blamed “Egyptian Islamists for launching an armed campaign against the Egyptian state without having exhausted the route of dialogue and reconciliation, while diverting resources away from what it sees as the real and legitimate struggle against Israel.”⁸¹ Hizbullah’s ability to target the right audience with the right message may to some extent provide it greater influence and support domestically and across the Muslim world to further its goals.

D. LEBANESE GOVERNMENT, ELECTORAL SYSTEM AND REFORMS

Hizbullah has been taken seriously by the Lebanese population which supports the party not only with their funds but also their votes, electing them to positions of political power. The Lebanese government is based on a confessional or proportional representation system that dates back to a 1932 census. The confessional system ensures, at the national level, that the President will be a Maronite Christian, the Prime Minister will be a Sunni Muslim, and the Speaker of Parliament will be a Shi’ite Muslim. This system of government, though not perfect, seems to endure. During the long civil war no

⁷⁷ Hamzeh, 43.

⁷⁸ Harb and Leenders, 174.

⁷⁹ Hamzeh, 43.

⁸⁰ Harb and Leender, 176.

⁸¹ Ibid., 178.

group called for complete abandonment of the confessional system. Instead the call was for reform and greater representation reflecting current Lebanese demographics.

It took a civil war and the Taif Accord to revise the Maronite-favored system of government. Taif Accord or, Document of National Understanding, was an effort to rebuild Lebanon's political system in the post-civil war period and provide better representation among sectarian groups. Sixty-two parliamentary members, elected in 1972, met in Taif, Saudi Arabia from September 30 until October 22, 1989. These individuals represented legitimately elected officials and were accepted as the best group to represent the Lebanese concerns and develop a reformed political system.

The Taif Accord called for the long term goal of abolishing the confessional system. This however would not be achievable in the short term. The main provisions of the Taif Accord redistributed parliamentary representation equally between Christians and Muslims. The old parliamentary distribution favored Christians by a 6:5 ratio. Two other provisions affected the power balance between the President, Prime Minister, and Speaker of Parliament. The Sunni Prime Minister and cabinet gained significant power as some responsibilities shifted away from the Christian President. The Shi'ite Speaker of Parliament also gained greater power via expanded responsibilities. Recommendations from the Taif Accord also led to a revised constitution which was approved in 1990. The Prime Minister is no longer chosen directly by the President but now by the President and parliament in the presence of the Speaker of Parliament. In addition to the Taif Accord, an electoral law to improve representation was passed in 1992 increasing the number of parliamentary seats from 99 to 128.⁸²

The 1992 elections were a defining moment for Lebanon. These elections would be the first in twenty years and the first to be held under the new constitution. The 128 seats were divided equally between Christians and Muslims. The Christian block was made up of Maronites, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholics, Armenian Orthodox, Armenian Catholics, Anglicans, and Others. The Muslim block was made up of Shi'ites, Sunnis, Druze, and Alawites.

An electoral law in 2000, supported by Syria who still occupied Lebanon, divided Lebanon into 14 constituencies and crossed sectarian boundaries. As a result, the groups

⁸² Abdo Baaklini, Guilain Denoeux, and Robert Springborg, *Legislative Politics in the Arab World*, Boulder CO: Lynne Rienner Publications, 1999, 97.

which supported Syria, primarily Hizbullah, Amal, and the Druze, benefited the most.⁸³ Even with new electoral laws and a revised constitution, the 15 years of civil war followed by 15 years of Syrian control did not fundamentally change the structure of Lebanon's confessional system of government.⁸⁴

E. HIZBULLAH: EXTREMISM, MODERATION AND POLITICAL GAIN

1. Political Gain

Hizbullah has competed in three parliamentary elections since 1992, winning at least ten percent of the seats. As a political party, for the last 15 years, it has effectively sought to democratize the national political system. In the mid-1990s, Hizbullah pushed for local government reform calling for democratic governance at the municipal level. Municipal elections had not been held since 1963. When local elections were held in 1998, Hizbullah gained 15 percent of the contested municipalities. During 2004 elections Hizbullah gained control of 21 percent of the municipalities.⁸⁵ Hizbullah has done very well in municipal and parliamentary elections but, refused to seek ministerial positions until 2005. Prior to 2005, the rationale for avoiding ministerial positions was to maintain a separation from the internal government structure in order to maintain a sense of loyalty to its constituents.

2. Hizbullah Support

In addition to political gain, Hizbullah provides for the greater good of Lebanese through its social programs. While it emerged out of conflict and is most widely known for forcing IDF troops to withdrawal from southern Lebanon, Hizbullah's greatest achievement may be in providing social services. Its ability to provide social services gained both loyalty and support from Muslims and Christians in war torn southern Lebanon. Within three years of its formation it provided trash-removal service to the areas it controlled. This was five years before the Lebanese government could achieve the same task. Hizbullah was not limited to trash-removal it also provided schools, hospitals, public health services, aid for rural-development, low-income housing assistance, small

⁸³ Sateh Nouredine and Laurie King-Irani, "Elections Pose Lebanon's Old Questions Anew," *Middle East Report Online*, May 31, 2005, 3.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁸⁵ Helena Cobban, "Hizbullah's New Face: In Search of a Muslim Democracy," *Boston Review*, April/May 2005, 1.

loans to businesses, and monetary aid to those in need. Hizbullah demonstrated its ability to provide for people's needs when the Lebanese government was unable. As the Lebanese government improves its ability to meet societal needs, Hizbullah remains a significant service provider.⁸⁶

Hizbullah social-service organizations provide assistance to all Lebanese who need help whether Muslim or Christian. Judith Palmer Harik, in her research, found that many Christian families send their children to Hizbullah run schools in areas of southern Lebanon. The rationale being Hizbullah provides the best education available. Harik credits Hizbullah's success in the political arena to its success in providing social services for the greater good of many Lebanese regardless of belief.⁸⁷

3. Obstacles to Democracy

While Hizbullah has sustained a successful political record, the fact remains that it retains its militant wing and has declared at times its willingness to use all means necessary when and if required. On multiple occasions, Hizbullah has stated its position with regards to Israel, the United States and the West in general. Hizbullah's 1985 "Open letter" clearly declared its enemies which included: Israel, France, and the United States. It called for the expulsion of French and American troops from Lebanon which occurred. It also called for the "obliteration" of the state of Israel.⁸⁸ Though Hizbullah seems to have moderated its goals on these matters has not officially changed.

In March 2004, Nasrallah again spoke of his feelings, and presumably those of Hizbullah, when discussing Israel and the United States. "Regarding the United States, Nasrallah referred to the 'Satanism of this administration'... America is proving everyday, not only in Iraq, but again in Palestine and through its veto that it is covering up for the killing, terrorism and crime; rather it is a complete partner in the killing, terrorism and crime." Regarding Israel he referred to them as a "monstrous, terrorist and cancerous entity."⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Cobban, 15-16.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 16-17.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 17.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 18.

While maintaining a hard-line stance against Israel and the United States, Hizbullah has indicated a willingness to disarm its militant wing if and when the Lebanese government is strong enough to defend against Israel and other potential external threats. Another factor may be the removal of Israeli forces from the contested Shebaa farms region. Ownership of the small area of land is disputed between Lebanon, Syria, and Israel. As long as Israeli forces occupy the area Hizbullah can justify the need to remain armed.⁹⁰ Hizbullah's reputation for armed resistance, as the only group to successfully defeat the IDF, may make it difficult to moderate and fully disarm. Disarming may appear as a sign of weakness or caving to United States and Western influence. The United States and Israel may have to make a significant effort to reach a lasting peace agreement. Current United States policy and recent Israeli actions to eliminate Hizbullah may have only strengthened support for Hizbullah within Lebanon and across the Middle East. These actions are counter productive and delay the prospects for a strong democratic Lebanon which could be the role model for the region.

Hizbullah's actions, rhetoric and political choices can be seen as an attempt to maintain the largest support base possible. Hizbullah is able to use its ideological frames: Islamism, Lebanese nationalism, Arab nationalism, and global anti-Imperialism to maintain support within and outside of Lebanon. "Thus far, inside Lebanon, they seem to have softened, or deferred until later, their desire for a completely Islamic government. Indeed, party leaders have always stressed that they do not seek to force either Islam or Islamic government on anyone; they simply 'invite' Christians in Lebanon and elsewhere to be open to hearing the Islamic call."⁹¹ Hizbullah's face to the external world, in light of the recent Israeli conflict, calls for the return to militancy and a renewed hard-line stance.

F. CONCLUSION

Hizbullah has clearly demonstrated its willingness to participate in Lebanon's political structure. Hizbullah is likely to continue promoting democratic reform and improving social welfare not only for Shi'ites but all Lebanese. The willingness to disarm

⁹⁰ Hamza Handawi, "Despite UN Calls, No Side Moving to Disarm Hezbollah," *International Herald Tribune*, Wednesday, September 27, 2006.

⁹¹ Cobban, 20.

and forego violence as a means to defend and advance its goals is unlikely as long as Israel is perceived as a threat to Lebanon and occupier of Palestinian land. The 2006 conflict between IDF and Hizbullah militia forces in southern Lebanon reinforced Hizbullah's belief in the need to remain armed and ready to defend against external threats. On September 22, 2006, Hizbullah leader Hassan Nasrallah addressed a million plus Lebanese gathering in a southern Beirut suburb. His message called for strong Lebanese unity and the need to rid Lebanon of corruption. Most surprising Nasrallah addressed the issue of disarming Hizbullah. He offered that when the state is strong enough to protect Lebanon then Hizbullah will disarm.⁹² The United States and the international community continue to pressure the Lebanese government to force Hizbullah to disarm. A way to promote disarmament may be to help Lebanon develop a stronger government able to control its own territory. The more likely option is to remove the perceived security threat posed by Israel. Israel must be willing to remove forces from the Shebaa farms region in conjunction with renewed efforts for peace with Lebanon and Syria. Hizbullah's participation in municipal and parliamentary elections combined with its controlled actions set an example for other Islamist groups around the world. Its actions should also capture the attention of the United States and other Western countries which have an interest in spreading democracy and eliminating radical Islamist elements in the region.

Social movements can either avoid or adapt to take advantage of changes within a political environment. Hizbullah has already become instrumental in providing social services. Hizbullah's participation in the political system would lead to further institutionalization and it becoming fully integrated into the Lebanese system. The final step for Hizbullah, who considers extreme violence part of its repertoire, is to completely forego violence becoming a legitimate political party in the eyes of the international community.

For now, Hizbullah may remain one of the most feared Islamic activist groups even though signs of moderation are present. Hizbullah presents a complex situation for

⁹² Nir Rosen, "Realities about Hizbullah, the Party of God," The Defense Association for Lebanon and Palestine Islamic Resistance Movement, http://www.moqavemat.ir/?lang=en&state=showbody_news&row_id=3603 (accessed October 2006).

Lebanon and the rest of the world. The key to Hizbullah becoming less violent and transitioning to a political party is disarmament.⁹³ Julia Choucair recommends the United States “adopt a low-profile approach, re-emphasizing that the issue of Hizbullah’s final status is to be resolved by the Lebanese.”⁹⁴ The big issue that fuels conflict in the region continues to be the Israeli-Palestinian issue. Until a peaceful solution is reached, it appears Hizbullah will remain unwilling to disarm. Prior transformation of the group indicates that moderation absent Israeli conflict is a real possibility. The 2006 conflict with Israeli forces may have turned back progress and reaffirmed the need for a strong militant wing to protect its interests and the people of southern Lebanon.

Hizbullah offers a flexible level of commitment that aids in its recruitment and retention of members. Hizbullah’s mastery of framing maintains organizational support and promotes its political strategy. Hizbullah’s frames are rooted in an ideology that promises an Islamic order and social justice that continues to resonate among its support base.

Hizbullah may disarm and adopt peaceful means but it will be a gradual transition based on a timeline it determines. Most Lebanese consider Hizbullah a valid organization, “as they credit it with pushing Israel out of Lebanon.”⁹⁵ For that same reason the Arab world recognizes their significance. Ahmad Hamzeh offers a less optimistic opinion: “Hizbullah’s operational choices--militancy and gradualist-pragmatic modes--sanctioned by its ideology as armed and unarmed struggle--give the party a choice to act according to the circumstances.” This is why Hizbullah has fluctuated between militancy and political gradualism. Hizbullah in essence has transformed itself into a political movement working from within the system, advocating the causes of underdogs in Lebanese society. Hizbullah has succeeded so far in capitalizing on its role in the ‘victory’ over the Israeli forces.”⁹⁶ Overall, it may be too early to tell if Hizbullah will disarm and rely only on democratic participation.

⁹³ Julia Choucair, “Lebanon: Finding a Path from Deadlock to Democracy,” Carnegie Papers, Middle East Series no. 64, Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, January 2006, 17.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 17.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Najib Ghadbian, “The New Asad,” *Middle East Journal*, vol. 55, no. 4, Autumn 2001, 629.

III. EGYPT AND THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD

A. INTRODUCTION

Since its founding, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt has remained dedicated to social welfare and civil society activism. For a brief period the Brotherhood pursued violent methods only to return to non-violent means. The group's institutionalization within Egyptian society has pushed the Brotherhood to participate in Egypt's political system. Advocating democracy and taking advantage of political opportunities allow the Brotherhood to advance its goals in an otherwise repressive authoritarian regime.⁹⁷ In doing so, the Brotherhood has promoted deeper democratic reforms. In addition, participation combined with moderation allows the Brotherhood to draw support from moderate Muslim constituents.

B. RISE OF MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD

The Society of Muslim Brothers or Muslim Brotherhood was founded by Hasan al-Banna, a schoolteacher, along with a small group of Egyptian laborers in the Suez Canal city of Isma'iliya in 1928. Al-Banna became a leading ideologue of Islamic Fundamentalism. The Muslim Brotherhood emerged during the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the rise of secular nationalism. The founding focus was to reestablish Islam's role in influencing state governance, which existed previously in the position of the *caliph* (leader) following the death of the prophet Mohammad.⁹⁸ Like other groups the goal was to return to the core principles of the Quran and establish Islamic social order. The Brotherhood represented a social movement focused less on religion and individual piety and more on the union of Islam and modernity to create a modern Islamic society. The Brotherhood's vision was to create a complete seamless Islamic environment which blended society, state, culture, and religion.⁹⁹ A general belief underlying fundamentalism and Islamism is that politics and religion were one during the time of the Prophet and should remain that way in modern times. In addition, the Brotherhood did

⁹⁷ Brown, Hamzawy, and Ottaway, 5.

⁹⁸ Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trial of Political Islam*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002, 27.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 28.

not rule out the belief that violence or *jihad* (Holy War) against an illegitimate regime may be necessary to establish true Islamic order.

During the early years, the Brotherhood remained relatively small and focused on building local membership. Al-Banna relocated the Brotherhood's core members to Cairo in order to expand membership and merge with another Islamic group run by al-Banna's brother.¹⁰⁰ During its first years in Cairo, the group published weekly newsletters, held a general conference, and continued to expand membership. By 1938, estimated membership was between 50,000 and 150,000 members. The Brotherhood remained focused on recruitment, mutual aid and building a social service organization. By the late 1930s, an internal shift took place and the organization became more involved in political activism. An Arab general strike in Palestine became the catalyst for political transition. The Society generated Egyptian public sympathy and collected funds to support the strike effort. Brotherhood newsletters were critical of the existing political regime and focused negatively on existing elements of British colonial control and influence.¹⁰¹

In 1941, the Brotherhood took a bold step entering the political arena putting forth candidates for parliamentary election. The Brotherhood sponsored large public rallies, held demonstrations to protest the presence of British troops and called for social reforms in Egypt. British authorities ordered al-Banna to leave Cairo in May 1941. In October, al-Banna and other Muslim Brotherhood leaders were imprisoned. In 1942, Brotherhood meetings were banned after hosting a public rally to denounce the British war effort. Shortly thereafter, the government became less concerned about Muslim reformers and more concerned about the Second World War. The government released Brotherhood leaders, allowed meetings to continue, and membership to grow.¹⁰²

During this period, the group had over two thousand branches and between 300,000 and 600,000 active members—the largest organized force in Egypt. In addition to membership expansion, the Brotherhood increased publications and public demonstrations, and adopted a more militant side. The Brotherhood created an internal

100 Ziad Munson, "Islamic Mobilization: Social Movement Theory and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood," *The Sociological Quarterly*, vol. 42, no. 4, 2001, 488.

101 Ibid.

102 Ibid., 489.

paramilitary group, known as the Secret Apparatus, to protect its leadership and conduct violent political acts to advance organizational goals.¹⁰³

Following the Second World War, the Muslim Brotherhood played a central role in the rise of popular unrest in Egypt. In 1947, the government and Egyptian police discovered the organization had a large arms cache stored outside Cairo. In 1948, the government officially outlawed the Brotherhood and many of its members were imprisoned after police confiscated a jeep filled with explosives. In retaliation, Brotherhood members assassinated Egyptian Prime Minister Mahmud Fahmi al-Nuqrashi. The Brotherhood's leader Hasan al-Banna was murdered two months later, allegedly by Egyptian police.¹⁰⁴

Following al-Banna's death, Hasan Ismail al-Hudaybi, a former Egyptian High court judge, became the Brotherhood's next leader. Al-Hudaybi kept the organization together during a period of government repression including the imprisonment of many of its members. The number of arrest exceeded four thousand.¹⁰⁵ The organization also suffered internal leadership struggles as well as external pressures.

On July 23, 1952, the government was overthrown by a military coup led by a group of military officers calling themselves the Free Officers. Gamal Nasser emerged as the leader of the Free Officers. According to Munson, the Free Officers had strong ties to the Muslim Brotherhood. With Gamal Nasser coming to power, the political environment improved for the Brotherhood. Once in power, Nasser released imprisoned members and allowed the Brotherhood to resume activities. The cordial relationship was short lived and Nasser suppressed Islamist ideology in favor of nationalism.¹⁰⁶ Tension increased to the point that on October 27, 1954 a Muslim Brotherhood member attempted to assassinate Nasser during a public speech. In response, Nasser ordered over a thousand members arrested and the Society disbanded for a second time. The crackdown resulted

¹⁰³ Munson, 489.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ David Zeidan, "Radical Islam in Egypt" in Barry Rubin, ed., *Revolutionaries and Reformers*, Albany NY: SUNY Press, 2003, 11.

in the execution of six Brotherhood leaders and many hundreds more tortured and imprisoned.¹⁰⁷

By 1970, the relationship between the Brotherhood and the Egyptian government would again swing in favor of the Brotherhood. President Anwar Sadat looked to the Brotherhood to serve as a balancer against pro-Nasserist groups which could form an opposition to his government.¹⁰⁸ During the Sadat era, the Brotherhood focused on rebuilding its membership and adopted a moderate stance becoming an organization committed to nonviolence and active participation in Egyptian politics.¹⁰⁹ Internal conflict within the Brotherhood caused radical militant members to splinter off and form new organizations. One such group, al-Jihad, was formed in 1979 by Muhammad Abd al-Salam Faraj. A member of al-Jihad later assassinated Sadat during a military parade in 1981.

Following Sadat's assassination, the Brotherhood took steps to distance itself from more militant Islamist groups. Sadat's death brought Vice President Hosni Mubarak to power. Mubarak immediately took steps to control the Islamists and had a number of radical Islamists arrested.¹¹⁰ By 1984, President Mubarak began to loosen his grip on Islamists. He allowed some political opportunity via controlled parliamentary election which, in turn, allowed a few Brotherhood members, campaigning as independents, to gain deputy positions. In addition to Mubarak's electoral concessions, most Islamic militants arrested in 1981 were released from prison.¹¹¹

Since the Sadat era, the Brotherhood continues to be a nonviolent Islamist movement indirectly participating in Egyptian politics. While the state does not recognize the Brotherhood as a legal political party, members have been elected into parliament. The Brotherhood's greatest strength may remain its ability to create change by influencing Egypt's Muslim population.

¹⁰⁷ Munson, 489.

¹⁰⁸ Zeidan, 12.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 11.

¹¹⁰ Kepel, 278.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 279.

C. MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD – SOCIAL MOBILIZATION AND IDEOLOGICAL FRAMING

1. Muslim Brotherhood Ideology

The Muslim Brotherhood emerged as a grassroots response to government repression and a crisis of modernity. Egypt was facing the challenges of colonialism, economic and cultural dependence, rapid industrialization and urbanization, a massive population explosion, and the need for improved social welfare.¹¹² The Brotherhood called for a return to the fundamentals of Islam as the basis of Muslim social and political renewal.¹¹³ Muslim Brotherhood ideology is based on the Hanbali school of Sunni Islam, one of the four main schools for Islamic understanding and interpretation of Islamic law. This school of law insists on a literal reading of the Quran and other texts. The Quran is believed to provide the universal moral principles for all actions. The Brotherhood's initial focus was centered on opposing foreign influence and control, poverty, and the moral decline of state and society in Egypt.¹¹⁴ Brotherhood ideology emphasized the need to build a single cohesive community resistant to Western influence and corruption.¹¹⁵

The Brotherhood called for the creation of an Islamic state and insisted Islam was democratic in nature and compatible with modernity. Muslim Brotherhood publications called for the state to provide a strong army, build closer ties with Arab nations and increase overall social welfare. Increased social welfare included more hospitals and clinics, better working conditions for agriculture and industrial workers, to include minimum wage, and an increase in government programs to reduce the growing unemployment problem.¹¹⁶

The Brotherhood was not only concerned with macro issues, it also focused on individual Muslims and how they live their daily lives. The Brotherhood believed a permissive secular lifestyle led to immorality, poverty, and Western domination. According to Munson, the Brotherhood advocated the need for censorship of television,

¹¹² Zeidan, 11; Munson, 489.

¹¹³ Zeidan, 11.

¹¹⁴ Munson, 489.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 490.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

radio and printed material. In addition, all education programs must include Islamic history, Arabic language, and Quranic studies. Each individual is responsible to adhere to the highest standards of conduct. Acts associated with alcohol, dancing, attending movie theaters, foreign styles of dress, prostitution and adultery should be avoided. The Brotherhood ideology tied the problems of state and society to the conduct of each individual Muslim in Egypt.¹¹⁷

The Muslim Brotherhood ideology may have gained the most ground during the Sadat era. Unlike Nasser, Sadat relaxed the state's monopoly on ideology and no longer sought to contain or control religion. The unintended consequence of using the Brotherhood to balance against pro-Nasserists and leftist movements was that the Brotherhood became a powerful force in society. The Brotherhood gained followers in an environment of open religious practice but remained constrained by a restrictive political arena. The mosque provided uninhibited space and opportunity for free exchange of ideas molded within a religious framework to influence individuals and politics.¹¹⁸

2. Muslim Brotherhood Mobilization

What motivates Muslims to join and why do they stay involved? Carrie Wickham's research on Islamic activism in Egypt provided an explanation. She found that "the presence of Islamist networks at the local level where people lived, studied, and worked made them highly accessible and minimized the social distance between participants and non-participants."¹¹⁹ Daily personal contact facilitated the decision to join the group.

The Sadat era allowed the Brotherhood to sink deep roots into society. During the 1970s, a significant increase in independent private mosques occurred. The importance of this fact is that independent mosques were not controlled by the government. The mosques provided a safe meeting point for members, militants, and recruits.¹²⁰ Sadat's encouragement of Islamism allowed an extensive social network to form. The Brotherhood's network of educational and social services provided opportunities to build

¹¹⁷ Munson, 490.

¹¹⁸ Kepel, 65.

¹¹⁹ Carrie Wickham, "Interests, Ideas, and Islamist Outreach in Egypt" in Quintan Wiktorowicz, ed., *Islamic Activism*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004, 233.

¹²⁰ Zeidan, 13.

and influence a community of supporters. Brotherhood expansion coincided with the government's inability to provide services due to economic constraints, population growth, and a large number of unemployed educated youth. All these factors benefited the Brotherhood.¹²¹

Intentionally or unintentionally the “Muslim Brotherhood has spawn many of the militant Islamic groups that exist today, including organizations such as Hamas, the Islamic Jihad, and Jamaat Islamiyah.”¹²² Many radical Islamist groups that splintered off the Brotherhood were influence by Seyyed Qutb, a Brotherhood member and leading ideologue. Seyyed Qutb's writings and interpretation of Islamic concepts made militant acts, such as the violent takeover of government, acceptable. He believed the “duty of righteous Muslims was to bring about God's sovereignty over society, denounce the unbelief of the current national leaders, and carry out a holy struggle against them.”¹²³

A demonstration of the Brotherhood's ability to mobilize the masses occurred in March 2005. Street demonstrations in Cairo and surrounding areas were meant to signal disapproval with Mubarak's electoral reforms. Roughly 1,500 Brotherhood members including some leaders were arrested and later released. The protests stopped by the summer but the intended message was delivered. The Brotherhood had broken its long standing truce to not engage politically against the Mubarak government.¹²⁴ The demonstrations were carefully targeted at policy not President Mubarak. The Brotherhood may have been sending a reminder of its capability to influence and mobilize a large portion of society.

3. Muslim Brotherhood Framing

From its beginning the slogan of the Muslim Brotherhood has been “the Quran is our constitution.” To its founders, Islam offered “a complete and total system, and there was no need to go looking for European values as a basis for social order.”¹²⁵ As mentioned earlier, religion provides a fundamental set of moral standards to mobilize

¹²¹ Zeidan, 12.

¹²² Munson, 488.

¹²³ Zeidan, 12.

¹²⁴ Elad-Altman, 32.

¹²⁵ Kepel, 27.

individuals or groups. Muslim Brotherhood success in mobilizing and expanding its membership is in the way it frames or presents its Islamic message on a personal level. The message is “tied to its organizational structure, activities, and strategies and the everyday lives of Egyptians.”¹²⁶

The Brotherhood serves the personal or selective interests of its members through its social programs and provides a sense of moral obligation through its Islamic ideology. For example, local mosques serve the selected interests of young adults by providing religious lessons and study group activities that create a social setting for both men and women to interact outside the home.¹²⁷ The Brotherhood influences its members through its social programs and teachings while providing a benefit that encourages participation. The participation in higher risk activities like protest demonstrations require a stronger framing mechanism.

Religion offers the Brotherhood one of the strongest framing mechanisms. By framing beliefs and activities in terms of Islam these beliefs and activities take on a moral or religious obligation.¹²⁸ If members do not participate their devotion to Islam and fellow Muslims comes under question. This creates conditions in which personal belief and commitment make it extremely difficult to resist engaging in organizational activities ending in possible imprisonment or death in extreme cases.

4. Muslim Brotherhood Political Opportunities in Egypt

Political opportunity in the Middle East remains limited. One explanation for regimes to limit open election and avoid democracy is the fear of a “one person, one vote, one time” scenario bringing Islamists to power.¹²⁹ “One person, one vote, one time” is the belief that Islamists only participate in elections in order to seize power and create a theocracy. As a result, Islamists would not allow another open democratic election which may result in a non-Islamic group regaining government control.¹³⁰ The Mubarak regime can therefore justify its actions and insist Islamists should not be given party status or

¹²⁶ Munson, 487.

¹²⁷ Wickham, 232.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Marina Ottaway and Thomas Carothers, “Middle East Democracy,” *Foreign Policy*, November/December 2004, 26.

¹³⁰ Israel Elad-Altmann, “Democracy, Elections and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood,” *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, vol. 3, Washington, D.C.: Hudson Institute, 2006, 28.

allowed to directly compete in elections. In order to contain or control electoral participation the electoral system itself is structured or “fixed” to influence election outcomes. According to LeVine, factors such as voter and candidate eligibility, drawing of electoral districts, the type of electoral system, and the distribution of assembly seats can play a part in keeping existing regimes in power while at the same time offering a minimal level of political participation.¹³¹

Even a small opening in the political arena is a “departure from past practices and contrast with some neighboring states, where legislatures are either non-existent or chosen without contestation.”¹³² The fact contested elections are held admits citizens have a right to determine their political leadership and form of government. During the 1980s, political reform in Egypt and several other Arab countries created the opportunity for multiparty competition. Reforms were constrained or undone in the 1990s, as regimes felt their position of power being threatened.¹³³ Regimes became fearful that parties would continue to gain political power and push for open elections at the national level. In order to prevent this from happening, governments adopted measures to limit opposition parties from gaining real political power.¹³⁴ President Mubarak remains unwilling to allow the Brotherhood legal political party status. The Brotherhood’s non-violent rhetoric may not be enough to provide Mubarak a sense of regime security given its violent past during the 1950s.¹³⁵

D. EGYPT’S POLITICAL SYSTEM

The political environment in Egypt has been governed by an authoritarian regime for most of its history. President Hasni Mubarak, in power since 1981, has allowed limited political reforms to take place in order to promote a democratic image to Egyptians and the outside world, however, Egypt remains predominantly authoritarian.

¹³¹ Mark LeVine, “Charting Elections in the Middle East, Middle East,” *Middle East Report Online*, <www.merip.org/mer/mer209/levine.htm>, 1.

¹³² Marsha Pripstein Posusney, “Behind the Ballot Box: Electoral Engineering in the Arab World,” *Middle East Report*, Winter 1998, 13.

¹³³ Ottaway and Carothers, 22.

¹³⁴ LeVine, 1.

¹³⁵ Emmanuel Sivan, “Why Radical Muslims Aren’t Taking Over Governments,” in Barry Rubin, ed., *Revolutionaries and Reformers*, Albany NY: SUNY Press, 2003, 8.

Mubarak's primary support base comes from the dominant National Democratic Party and the military.

Egyptian parliament, established in 1866, stands as the largest and longest running parliamentary system in the region. While the parliament remains relatively weak in comparison to the executive it has, at times, been a source of opposition to the ruling regime.¹³⁶ The primary actors within the Egyptian system are the President, Prime Minister, and the parliament consisting of the Consultative Council (upper house), with 264 seats, and the People's Assembly (lower house), with 454 seats. The Consultative Council is also referred to as the Shura Council.¹³⁷

E. POLITICAL AND ELECTORAL SYSTEM REFORM

Egyptian regimes overtime have taken steps to "re-Islamize" their governments. They have adopted Islamic rhetoric as a way of marginalizing or co-opting potential Islamist opposition while at the same time adding legitimacy to their own authority. For example, the Egyptian constitution of 1971 reintroduced religious law as a guiding principle by declaring *sharia* the main source of reference to develop legislation.¹³⁸

In recent years, Mubarak has cautiously taken steps to open or at least provide more transparency and honest reform in his government. Opening the political space comes at a price. While the 2000 election was perceived as "cleaner than previous elections," the ruling National Democratic Party showed some weakness as party dominance fell from 90.4 percent (1995 election) to 87.8 percent.¹³⁹ The National Democratic Party (NDP) initially captured 175 seats while independent candidates gained 250. In the end, 213 independent candidates joined the NDP re-establishing its control over parliament.¹⁴⁰ The 2000 election also witnessed an increase in Muslim Brotherhood candidates competing as independents. The Muslim Brotherhood was able to gain 17 seats in the 2000 election.

¹³⁶ Baaklini et al., 221.

¹³⁷ Jeremy Sharp, "Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations," Congressional Research Service Report RL33003, Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, December 7, 2005.

¹³⁸ Olivier Roy, *Failure of Political Islam*, Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994, 127.

¹³⁹ Mona El-Ghobashy, "Egypt's Paradoxical Elections," *Middle East Report*, no. 238, Spring 2006, 21.

¹⁴⁰ Marina Ottaway, *Democracy Challenged: The Rise of Semi-Authoritarianism*, Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2003, 44.

While 2000 showed some opening in the political space, President Mubarak promised to allow a competitive presidential election in 2005. Technically the election process was open and competitive however political rules of engagement guaranteed Mubarak would retain the presidency.¹⁴¹ Rules of engagement included the requirement for unaffiliated candidates to secure the signature of at least 65 members of Egypt's lower house of parliament, 25 from the upper house members, and 10 municipal council members. National Democratic Party dominance in all three areas made the task nearly impossible to achieve.¹⁴²

The 2005 elections demonstrated a turning point in Egyptian political environment. The people demonstrated through the ballot box the desire for change. While the presidency was safe, parliamentary elections resulted in 70 percent turnover. The NDP still maintains an overwhelming majority however, Muslim Brotherhood members competing as independent candidates made a substantial advance in the political arena by gaining 88 seats.

F. MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD: EXTREMISM, MODERATION AND POLITICAL GAIN

While Muslim Brotherhood is not an official political party and the Mubarak regime continues to constrain the political space, the brotherhood has clearly gained some ground. Overall success in Egyptian parliamentary elections has been mixed but is now showing a positive trend. The Brotherhood gained 36 of 454 seats (eight percent) in 1987, boycotted elections in 1990, gained 1 seat in 1995, 17 seats in 2000 (four percent), and 88 seats (nineteen percent) in 2005. It seems like the Brotherhood has put away violence to promoted social welfare, education, and political participation. Grassroots involvement allows the Brotherhood to build social networks to influence the population and create a community of supporters.¹⁴³

The Brotherhood in Egypt also appears to be what scholars are calling a mainstream Islamic movement. Mainstream Islamist movements can be defined as having strictly "renounced violence and are pursuing their goals through peaceful

¹⁴¹ Jillian Schwedler and Laryssa Chomiak, "And the Winner Is...Authoritarian Elections in the Arab World," *Middle East Report*, no. 238, Spring 2006, 13.

¹⁴² Schwedler and Chomiak, 18.

¹⁴³ Barry Rubin, "Islamist Movements in the Middle East," in Barry Rubin, ed., *Revolutionaries and Reformers*, Albany NY: SUNY Press, 2003, 215.

political activity.”¹⁴⁴ There exists, however, division within the Brotherhood. The division is between old guard hard-liners and younger middle generation members. The old guard grew up in the Brotherhood during the repressive Nasser era while the middle generation experienced greater freedom under Sadat. The old guard is more conservative seeking to preserve the movement’s missionary focus. The middle generation is more open to change and focused on political opportunity. Middle generation leaders seek to form an open political party. Middle generation leaders have also accused the old guard hard-liners of colluding with the Mubarak regime to maintain status quo restricting further democratic reform.¹⁴⁵ The middle generation has chosen to remain loyal to Brotherhood and not splinter off and join forces with Egypt’s reformist al-Wasat Party. The al-Wasat party, to some extent, promotes a “believing secularism” ideology.¹⁴⁶ The difference of opinion within Brotherhood ranks may not be enough to cause a breakup, but it emphasizes the fact that true democracy will not be possible without promoting an open political system. Islamist parties are the only non-governmental organizations which have the capacity to form an alternative to ruling regimes. If Islamist parties are not allowed to participate in an open political environment any form of democracy is near impossible to achieve.¹⁴⁷

Regime backlash, in addition to political rules of engagement, may also be an obstacle to political gain for the Muslim Brotherhood. Human Rights Watch reported that 792 Muslim Brotherhood members were detained between March and mid-October 2006. The article stated, Muslim Brotherhood lawyers confirmed that 62 members remain in custody (as of 18 October). Detainees include 33 held “without charge under provisions of Egypt’s Emergency Law, which allows the government to indefinitely detain people without charge, trial or legal recourse.” The remaining 29 were charged with “belonging to an illegal organization.” Sarah Leah Whitson, Middle East director at Human Rights Watch is also quoted as saying, “Once again, the Egyptian authorities are relying on illegitimate laws to imprison members of the political opposition...[d]ay after day, month

¹⁴⁴ Brown, Hamzawy, and Ottaway, 3.

¹⁴⁵ Elad-Altman, 26-27.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 34.

¹⁴⁷ Ottaway and Carothers, 26.

after month, the government tramples on the rights of Egyptian citizens to ensure that it maintains its monopoly on power.”¹⁴⁸

G. CONCLUSION

The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt went through a stage of using violence but returned to non-violence. Radical factions advocating violence have emerged from within, but the Brotherhood itself has remained non-violent since the 1950s. Those factions split from the parent organization and pursued their own path. Since 1981, the Brotherhood distanced itself from more violent groups. In doing so, the group heeded its own interests in the political arena and its priority of social welfare and civil society activism. The Brotherhood has maintained its position on non-violence and continues to pressure the Mubarak regime for political reform. The Muslim Brotherhood’s willingness to participate in Egypt’s political process, indirectly if necessary, suggest there is an opportunity to become institutionalized into the state political system versus being seen merely as an opposition force to the current regime.

The Mubarak regime clearly has the upper hand in designing the electoral rule set. The Muslim Brotherhood’s popularity and ability to be elected should send a clear signal to the regime that the potential for political unrest may be looming on the horizon. Continued political exclusion forces the Brotherhood to continue grassroots efforts to influence the masses. The Muslim Brotherhood remains aware of the volatility of the Muslim street, and this could cause a return to violence by the Brotherhood.

¹⁴⁸ Quoted in Human Rights Watch, “Egypt: Crackdown on Muslim Brotherhood Deepens,” http://hrw.org/english/docs/2006/10/24/egypt14433_txt.htm (accessed November 2006).

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IV. PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY AND HAMAS

A. INTRODUCTION

On January 25, 2006, Palestinians went to the ballot box and cast their votes in favor of the Islamic Resistance Movement, *Harakat al-Muqawima al-Islamiyya*, commonly referred to as Hamas. The Palestinians sent a clear signal to Fatah controlled Palestinian Authority (PA): the time for change is now. Hamas gained 74 of 132 seats, in a free and open election, giving them controlling majority. Four Hamas members competing as independent candidates also gained seats in the election. It seems Palestinians lost faith in the “negotiation for peace” program that began with Yasser Arafat and continued under PA President Mahmoud Abbas. Attempts over the last forty years to achieve lasting peace yielded little more than brief periods of reduced violence. Hamas’ political achievement significantly transformed the political landscape, breaking Fatah’s single-party dominance and setting the course for more democratic governance to emerge.

B. RISE OF HAMAS

The Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) formed in 1987 as an outgrowth of the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood. Hamas’ founders were Brotherhood members and the organization remains closely tied to the Muslim Brotherhood network. The first Palestinian *intifada* (uprising) against Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory served as the trigger mechanism for change.¹⁴⁹ The *intifada* drove the organization to adopt a more aggressive strategy. Hamas emerged as a competing force to the already established Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). Compared to the PLO’s political practices and agenda, Hamas offered Palestinians a more violent alternative to further the Palestinian cause. Two factors shaped the formation of Hamas, the first being the historical teachings of Muslim Brotherhood ideologue, Seyyed Qutb. His call for *jihad* and the use of violence to stop the advance of Western secular ideology legitimizes Hamas’ actions. The second influence was the success of the Iranian Revolution led by

¹⁴⁹ Charles D. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 5th ed., New York: St. Martins, 2004, 410.

Ayatollah Khomeini in 1979. The Iranian Revolution demonstrated to the Islamic world that a regime, illegitimate in the eyes of the people, could be successfully overthrown.¹⁵⁰

In the early years, Hamas support came primarily from the Gaza strip and to a lesser extent the West Bank. In Gaza, it is estimated that initially 20 percent of the Palestinians supported Hamas. In the long run, Hamas seeks to create an Islamic Palestinian state. However, Hamas has demonstrated a willingness to put aside that goal in order to collaborate with other Palestinian groups to first defeat Israel.¹⁵¹ The details of implementing an Islamic versus secular Palestine could be left for the future.

Fatah struggled in the 1990s to maintain its shaky majority in the PLO, and later PA, in the occupied territories. Hamas influence grew as diplomatic settlements like the Oslo Accords continued to benefit Israel at the expense of the Palestinians. As the *intifada* continued, Hamas and other Palestinian resistance groups engaged in more violent actions against Israel. Hamas with its military wing, *Izz al-Din al-Qassam* brigade, came to be known for its suicide bomber attacks. These attacks were an effort to force change and inflict revenge for ongoing Israeli attacks against Palestinians in the occupied territories.

C. HAMAS – SOCIAL MOBILIZATION AND FRAMING

1. Political Opportunity

Hamas' 2006 parliamentary victory may be more than it had hoped for in terms of political gain. It is not clear whether the 2006 election is the pinnacle or just the start of continued political opportunities. This opportunity for Hamas can be linked to a series of external factors which shaped the political environment. According to Glenn Robinson, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Iranian Revolution, the first Palestinian *intifada* and 1993 Oslo Accords all played a role in shaping conditions on the ground.¹⁵² The Iranian Revolution demonstrated the capability of Islamists to create change. The first *intifada* demonstrated the Palestinian will to mobilize. Failure to establish a lasting peace settlement with Israel weakened the PA's position while strengthening support for

¹⁵⁰ Smith, 2004, 410.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Glenn E. Robinson, "Hamas as Social Movement," in *Islamic Activism*, ed. Quintan Wiktorowicz, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004, 123.

Hamas. Hamas is seen as an organization which can deliver on its promises, whether providing social services or deterring external aggression.

Israel's goal of creating internal division within the PLO also benefited Hamas. During the 1980s, Israel worked to weaken the PLO by pitting the Islamists against Yasser Arafat's secular nationalist movement.¹⁵³ Granting Hamas this freedom to operate backfired; since then popular support for Hamas has steadily grown. Hamas to some is seen as an equal to Hizbullah in its ability to resist Israeli aggression. Hizbullah was an organizational role model based on its success in driving back the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) from southern Lebanon.

2. Resource Mobilization

Hamas, like Hizbullah and the Muslim Brotherhood, draws its support and ability to mobilize from an extensive network of grassroots institutions. Glenn Robinson's research categorizes these institutions into three groups: mosque-based, educational and medical, and political.¹⁵⁴ The mosque plays a key role in mobilizing the masses. For the most part, the mosque falls outside the control of authoritarian regimes and occupying forces. This insulation provides a central location to gather, organize, train, disseminate information, and administer needed services and social programs. Further, the mosque can serve as a children's school, religious training center, or health clinic.

Hamas has developed extensive medical and education facilities to complement its mosque-based institutions. In 1997, Hamas opened a Scientific Medical Association, similar to the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, to run medical and dental clinics as well as a blood bank.¹⁵⁵ Educational facilities range from elementary schools to the Islamic University in Gaza. Hamas also provides a full spectrum of services to support Palestinians in the occupied territories. Palestinian Authority's reliance on Hamas to provide services to Palestinians makes it difficult for PA to respond to foreign pressure to shutdown Hamas. Prior to Hamas' parliamentary victory it had already become a significant player in the Palestinian political landscape.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ Robinson, 124.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 126.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 127.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 128.

Hamas' third type of institution to mobilize support is its political wing. The political wing seeks to win the hearts and minds of young college and university students in order to recruit members and support. This practice has its roots in the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood. In the years prior to the *intifada* Islamists began to gain ground over PLO and Fatah influence on campuses. This focus on recruitment is closely followed by the political wings work on public relations.¹⁵⁷ Popularity and positive image, within and beyond the occupied territories, are linked to growing support and funding. These avenues of resources allow Hamas to continue its militant and social service operations.

3. Framing

Vital to maintaining support is how Hamas frames its goals and actions. Framing again refers to how a movement presents or justifies its actions in a way that resonates with current and potential members and supporters. A personal bond, shared belief or identity must be established with members to motivate collective action. Hamas' ideological framing includes, but is not limited to, the following concepts: Palestine is *waqf* (religious endowment), Islam is the solution, and patience.¹⁵⁸ The concept that Palestine is *waqf* refers to land given by divine right to Muslims, which must remain Muslim land. An explicit goal of Hamas is to reclaim the land of Palestine. Once declared *waqf*, no Muslim generation can allow the land to be given or taken away. Reclaiming the land becomes a religious obligation for all Muslims.¹⁵⁹ Declaring the land of Palestine *waqf* creates a dilemma for Hamas in that it can not accept a two state solution to resolve the conflict with Israel. Hamas has indicated a willingness to accept a temporary truce and allow future generations to resolve the issue. An alternative option is to allow other PA members, such as Fatah, to negotiate a solution. Hamas can honor the agreement without officially declaring the agreement acceptable.

A second framing aspect, common among Islamist groups, is the notion that Islam

¹⁵⁷ Robinson, 128-129.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 132-133.

¹⁵⁹ Jeroen Gunning, "Peace With Hamas?: The Transforming Potential of Political Participation," *International Affairs*, vol. 80, no. 2, 2004, 241.

is the solution. According to Article 1, Chapter 1 of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) Charter:

The basis of the Islamic Resistance Movement is Islam. From Islam it derives its ideas and its fundamental precepts and view of life, the universe, and humanity; and it judges all its actions according to Islam and is inspired by Islam to correct its errors.¹⁶⁰

By declaring Islam the solution, Hamas can legitimize its actions based on divine guidance. Hamas can claim to be leading Palestinians back to the true path and restoring Palestinian land lost due to Muslims turning away from the true path of Islam.¹⁶¹

A third framing aspect is patience. Patience refers to the mindset that, in the long run, Hamas and Palestinians will be victorious in their battle to regain Palestine. Patience does not rule out action when necessary, nor does it mean transitional periods are unacceptable.¹⁶² An example of a transitional period could be a two state solution for Israel and Palestine or an initial secular government once a Palestinian state is formed.

D. PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY AND GOVERNANCE

The PA has been characterized to a great extent to be as authoritarian as many existing regimes in the region.¹⁶³ Since 1969, Fatah dominated the PLO and later the PA.¹⁶⁴ Both the PLO and PA remained resilient to Israeli and international pressure over the years. Even in 1982, when the PLO was forced to abandon its territorial stronghold in Lebanon, it remained a significant force in Middle East as well as international politics.¹⁶⁵ The PLO and later PA officially represented Palestinians while Hamas operated in opposition to both PA governance and Israeli occupation. As mentioned, the Oslo peace process failure weakened PA support while boosting support for Hamas. As conflict with Israel continued, economic and social conditions declined. The PA seemed unable to improve conditions while Hamas, with its grassroots support network, provided

¹⁶⁰ Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2006, 177.

¹⁶¹ Robinson, 131.

¹⁶² Ibid., 133.

¹⁶³ Nathan J. Brown, "Evaluating Palestinian Reform," Democracy and Reform Project, Middle East Series no. 59, Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June 2005, 3.

¹⁶⁴ Brown, 14.

¹⁶⁵ Mishal and Sela, 149.

services and actively interfaced with Palestinians on a daily basis. Hamas successfully demonstrated the capability to make a difference.

E. HAMAS: EXTREMISM, MODERATION, AND POLITICAL GAIN

The United States and the European Union continue to consider Hamas a terror organization, not a political party. Palestinians seem to have a different perspective on this. Prior to the January parliamentary elections, Khalid Jadu, Hamas councilman in Bethlehem, was quoted as saying, “anything more than 55 seats would be an achievement--and probably a headache.”¹⁶⁶ This comment by an elected councilman indicates Hamas wants to play a significant role in Palestinian politics, but does not necessarily desire complete governmental control. Graham Usher offers three reasons for Hamas’ success in the January elections. The first reason was overall Palestinian disillusionment with the lack of progress towards lasting peace with Israel. The second reason for Hamas’ popularity was its ability to provide services while continuing its armed resistance against Israel. Hamas armed resistance is believed to have forced the 2005 Israeli withdrawal from Gaza. The third reason had less to do with Hamas and more to do with Fatah’s perceived misrule of the Palestinian Authority. The perception is that Fatah failed to establish law and order, promote economic recovery, and achieve political progress after Israeli withdrawal.¹⁶⁷

Leading up to parliamentary elections, Hamas elected officials and candidates put forth a campaign platform stressing the need for change. On the issue of Israel and peace, Ziad Daiah, a Hamas representative in Ramallah, told reporters that “[we] are not interested in the Oslo-type peace process that went on for 10 years and wasted time. But if Israel will start new negotiations, with direct benefits for Palestinians in a useful time frame, we will accept that.”¹⁶⁸ While the Israeli conflict is an issue, the campaign focused more on important Palestinian welfare issues. The Hamas campaign focused heavily on “fighting corruption, establishing good governance and restoring rule of law.”¹⁶⁹ This message continued in victory speeches with the additional call to revamp public services.

¹⁶⁶ Graham Usher, “Hamas Risen,” *Middle East Report*, no. 238, Spring 2006, 2.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁶⁸ Fotini Christia and Sreemati Mitter, “Hamas at the Helm,” *New York Times*, January 27, 2006, 1, (accessed August 2006).

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

Final parliamentary election results gave Hamas a victory; electoral analysis, however, told a slightly different story. Hamas won 45 of 66 (68 percent) district seats. On average, Hamas received 36.5 percent of the votes per district--a high enough percentage to beat the closest competition. That means on average 63 percent of the voting population in each district voted for a non-Hamas candidate. Sixty-three percent of the vote was dispersed between Fatah and other independent candidates. The competition for national seats produced similar results, where Hamas won 29 to Fatah's 28 seats. In terms of voter percentage Hamas took around 44 percent of the vote. The remaining 56 percent was divided between Fatah (42 percent) and other candidates. The margin of victory was closer than the bottom-line presented. After defeat, one Fatah leader stated, "Hamas did not win the election. Fatah lost."¹⁷⁰ The results would seem to affirm that statement.

In reaction to the Hamas victory, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, on January 29, called for an emergency meeting of parliament and exercised the power of the presidency to safeguard his position. Abbas declared that the Finance and Information ministries, as well as all PA security forces, would report directly to the president as opposed to the prime minister. Hamas' Ismail Haniyeh would become the new prime minister as a result of elections. Hamas quickly protested, pointing out that Finance, Information and three of the security forces (police, civil defense, and the Preventive Security Force) are constitutionally mandated to fall under the prime minister's purview.¹⁷¹ President Abbas' actions are similar to the actions taken by other authoritarian regimes to maintain political control, while at the same time provide some level of democratic opening. In the Egyptian case, President Mubarak allowed open parliamentary elections subject to carefully crafted rules and laws that guaranteed his position of power.

While Hamas verbally protested the president's governmental realignment, it took no action to force a reversal. Instead it chose to exercise patience and address the issue at a later time. Hamas knows the Preventive Security Force is Fatah's most organized base of support and could pose the biggest threat or source of resistance to the new Hamas

¹⁷⁰ Usher, 5.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

government. Hamas would use patience and open dialogue with Fatah to resolve Abbas' 'bloodless coup' actions to form a government which serves all Palestinians.¹⁷² This position reflects a moderate approach to governance and a reluctance to force the formation of an Islamic state before the Palestinian society is ready.

President Abbas stated his expectations for the new government in a February 18 address to the newly formed parliament. His expectations included: "1) abide by existing agreements with Israel, including the 1993 Oslo and 1994 Oslo accords and the 2003 'road map' toward peace; 2) accept negotiations as the 'strategic and credible' way to resolve the conflict; and 3) espouse peaceful rather than armed resistance." In response to Abbas, Khalid Mashaal, Hamas politburo head, stated: "The Palestinian Authority was founded on the basis of the Oslo accords. We recognize that this is a reality, and we will deal with it with the utmost realism, but without neglecting our fundamental principles... [in] other words, we will honor our commitments, provided they serve our people and do not infringe on our rights, but we will not accept dictates. This, very clearly, is our position."¹⁷³

Initial reaction over the Hamas victory was mixed from within the Palestinian community and from states around the globe. Mohammad Dahlan, former Palestinian Authority Security chief and Fatah member of Parliament, was quoted as saying "Fatah is the first movement, the only movement, and it will remain the first and only movement despite all those who conspire against it...Fatah will not join a government led by Hamas."¹⁷⁴ Public protests for and against Hamas took place in the occupied territories as well.

During the sixth Israel-Europe conference held February 6, 2006 in Jerusalem, Israel's acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmert stated: "There will be no recognition of a Palestinian government with the participation or under the control of Hamas unless three conditions are met: [1] the Hamas charter is changed to recognize the state of Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state; [2] total dismantling of all weapons and a total cessation of all terrorist activity; and [3] acceptance of all agreements signed between the PA and

¹⁷² Usher, 5.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 6.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 1.

the state of Israel.”¹⁷⁵ Israel not only spoke out, but immediately imposed sanctions on PA as soon as Hamas deputies took their places in parliament. Sanctions included a “freeze” on the transfer of \$55 million in monthly tax rebates to the PA.

Members of the “Quartet” (United States, European Union, Russia, and the United Nations) withheld action until the new Palestinian government had formed. One reason for the delay was to extend the relative calm in Israel until after Israeli elections on March 28. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was concerned that a rise in Israeli domestic conflicts would favor Binyamin Netanyahu and the Likud Party. A second, and more important, reason was to allow Mahmoud Abbas time to consolidate his power in order to counter, if necessary, the new Hamas government. A third reason may have been to allow an international coalition against Hamas to form in order to force moderation if it sought to remain in power.¹⁷⁶

Israeli rhetoric and immediate sanctions may have been an attempt to provoke Hamas. An armed retaliation by Hamas would weaken its acceptance as an Islamist political party seeking to create a better government. Any action would merely demonstrate to the world it was only capable of violence. To its credit, Hamas did not take the bait. It kept its fighters out of the fray until the recent Israeli-Palestinian conflict in June 2006. Since the violence seems to have subsided, Hamas has concentrated on working with Fatah to establish better governance.¹⁷⁷

The three Israeli conditions for Hamas’ political legitimization were also adopted, to a large degree, by the United States, the European Union and United Nations; Russia took its own approach. Russia invited a Hamas delegation to Moscow to establish immediate diplomatic channels and possibly demonstrate its good will to states across the Middle East.¹⁷⁸ The United States and the European Union still consider Hamas a terrorist organization and closed the door to diplomatic relations. In April 2006, the European Union decided to withhold aid to Hamas. This decision to restrict aid which would pay the salaries of Palestinian public employees, was due to Hamas’ on-going

¹⁷⁵ Usher, 8.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 9.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 8.

refusal “to abide by previous Palestinian decisions to recognize Israel and renounce violence.”¹⁷⁹

In May 2006, representatives from the Quartet met to further discuss the question of international aid for the Palestinians. The European Union favored establishing a trust fund to be administered by President Mahmoud Abbas. While this would ensure funding would bypass Hamas, the United States remained hesitant.¹⁸⁰ Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said the United States was agreeable to releasing \$10 million in support of a new medical program for Palestinians, as long as the money remained outside of Hamas control. Further funding would be withheld to prevent Hamas from using any funds to launch suicide attacks on Israel.¹⁸¹ Over the past decade, Hamas has claimed responsibility for dozens of suicide bomber attacks launched against Israel. The bottomline is that international funding will not be fully re-established unless Hamas or some other form of Palestinian government commits to the principles of nonviolence, the recognition of Israel, and acceptance of all previous agreements and obligations.¹⁸²

After considering initial reactions from Fatah, the United States, and Israel, former Hamas spokesman Mushir al-Masri was quoted as saying: “Hamas derives its legitimacy from the Palestinian people, not from the international community...[one] of the reasons they voted for us was our fixed principles. And one of these is that there will be no recognition of Israel as long as it occupies our land. Another is that it is the inalienable right of the occupied to resist the occupier.”¹⁸³

Hamas victory in the election poles made it the only legitimate group, constitutionally authorized, to form a new Palestinian government. Consistent with pre-election rhetoric, Hamas remains in favor of a national coalition in which all Palestinian

¹⁷⁹ Thomas Friedman, “The Hamas Dilemma,” *New York Times*, April 12, 2006, Op-Ed.

¹⁸⁰ Ibrahim Barzak, “Hamas-Fatah Violence Erupts in Gaza as Key Western Mediators Consider Aid Cutoff,” Associated Press Worldstream, May 9, 2006, LexisNexis, <http://www.nexis.com/research> (accessed Aug 24, 2006).

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ben Fisherman and Mohammad Yaghi, “The Future of a Palestinian Unity Government,” Policy Watch no. 1148, Washington, D.C.: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, September 2006, 1, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org> (accessed September 2006).

¹⁸³ Usher, 2.

groups will participate in government.¹⁸⁴ The Hamas agenda seeks “to restore the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to its ‘proper relationship,’ away from the hegemony of Israel’s security needs and Washington’s regional designs and back to the paradigm of an illegal occupation and an occupied people’s right to resist it, ‘including armed resistance’.”¹⁸⁵

Hamas gained control of parliament and, with it, a large debt. Increased international pressure in the form of sanctions significantly impacts Hamas’ ability to govern without additional sources of funding. Without funding Hamas may be forced to capitulate to some degree to succeed. Hamas must put aside its historically adversarial relationship with Fatah. Many Palestinians seek a national coalition government, a view shared by pre-election Hamas. President Abbas’ actions to consolidate control over his security, finance and information ministries demonstrated his reluctance to hand over the government to Hamas. President Abbas executed a number of last-minute actions, approved by a Fatah-dominated parliament, in preparation for a potential constitutional crisis between the two branches of government once Hamas stepped in.¹⁸⁶

As opposed to crisis, the Hamas rise to power has taken a pragmatic course of action; one of control and desire to create a government for the betterment of all Palestinians. In September 2006, the two sides led by President Mahmoud Abbas (Fatah) and Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh (Hamas) had settled their differences and agreed to pursue the formation of a national unity government.¹⁸⁷ Once formed, the new unity government seeks to adopt a solution which will satisfy the Quartet’s demands in order to re-establish international aid.

The greatest impact of Hamas’ stunning parliamentary election victory may not be what it can do while in office, but simply the fact that it was elected through open and honest elections. The series of local races culminating in the parliamentary elections demonstrated the desire for change and elimination of status quo victories for Fatah. The victory should send a signal to other states in the region. The defeat of the long-ruling Fatah party at the hands of its Islamist rivals could be the beginning of a trend, according

¹⁸⁴ Usher, 3.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 6.

¹⁸⁷ Fisherman and Yaghi, 1.

to Diaa Rashwan, in which the people of the region have come to identify themselves more as Muslims than Arabs.¹⁸⁸

Fatah, starting in the late 1960s, became the controlling party of the PLO. Within a few years later, the PLO became the internationally recognized Palestinian representative with other factions taking a supporting role. Before the PA was established in the early 1990s, Palestinians sought to establish a democratic self ruling government. The belief at the time was that Israeli occupation could be defeated by democratic self-governance.¹⁸⁹ The 2006 election is not the first democratic election held by the PA; elections were held shortly after the 1993 Oslo accords. What makes local elections in 2005 and the parliamentary election in 2006 different was better organized and administration. Local measures were put in place to ensure honest and transparent elections. The steps taken to ensure open democratic elections may become an expectation among the Palestinians, thus a normal practice and institutionalized into the political process. Since the 1970s, democracy has been an enduring goal, driven in large part by Palestinian civil society, and the ongoing development of a culture of resistance among people living under Israeli occupation.¹⁹⁰

Credit must also be given to PA President Mahmoud Abbas and the independent Palestinian Central Election Commission. Without their presence to guarantee an open and honest election, the 2006 parliamentary election may have turned out differently. Hamas might have gained a significant number of parliamentary seats; however, it is likely that Fatah would have been declared the winner regardless of the actual vote. The 2006 election shows that Israel is no longer the sole democracy among predominantly authoritarian regimes in the region. Palestinians now set the example for other Arab countries by holding open and free democratic elections, even under conditions of occupation.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸ Fisherman and Yaghi, 1.

¹⁸⁹ Riad Malki, "Beyond Hamas and Fatah," *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 17, no. 3, July 2006, 133.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 132.

¹⁹¹ Malki, 132.

F. CONCLUSION

While Hamas continues to reject the peace process and recognition of the state of Israel, its “unexpected landmark victory” and willingness to form a government of national unity has demonstrated its willingness to change. A strong but moderate approach to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict may emerge. Clearly, the Fatah monopoly on governance is over--the door is now open for a moderate voice to emerge from within the Palestinian community. Hamas victory demonstrated the desire for change and may in fact generate a multiparty system which can be in place for future democratic elections.

It is too soon to tell to what extent Hamas is willing to moderate its actions against Israel and seek diplomatic negotiations. In addition, its lack of domestic and international political experience may keep it occupied, preventing any significant changes until the next election. However, its ability to come to power has significantly transformed the political landscape by interrupting single party dominance. Open competitive elections and advances toward democratic reform are likely to continue for the Palestinians. The Palestinians cast a deciding vote for change, and because of Hamas, a more democratic form of governance has the chance to emerge.

As more democratic opportunities potentially emerge, Hamas may find it necessary to further moderate its position in order to maintain its popularity and support base. If Hamas remains an obstacle to foreign aid, its support may begin to diminish. Palestinians desire progress and reform, they have proven their willingness to support the party that can deliver. Fatah learned this lesson in 2006.

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V. CONCLUSION

A. ISLAMIC ACTIVISM AND THE POTENTIAL FOR CHANGE

Over the last few decades, a number of Islamist movements decided to abandon violence and take a more democratic path by participating in local and national elections. This thesis looked specifically at the political success achieved by Hizbullah in Lebanon, Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and Hamas in Gaza and the West Bank. This research considered how efforts to sustain and expand Islamist movements have to some extent altered organizational goals and tactics as well as the regime environment in which they operate. Specifically, the research focused on changes in Islamist tactics to take advantage of political opportunities. The three cases provide insight to explain how on-going institutionalization of Islamist groups and the need to maintain membership encourages moderation, political participation, and a democratic agenda. Islamists provide a necessary component for lasting democracy to develop in the region.

Academic literature on democracy formation suggests lasting democracy requires a strong civil society.

Specifically, it requires citizens, organized into the nongovernmental bodies that make up civil society, to keep elected government honest and prevent it from falling into familiar patterns of corruption and the arbitrary exercise of power.¹⁹²

Authoritarian regimes “have prevented the rise of vibrant secular civil society and the kind that many theorists of democratization have long believed necessary.”¹⁹³ Islamist groups, like those presented, fill the civil society void. In doing so, they become institutionalized and a critical component to further democracy. Islamists are currently the only organized group strong enough to promote democratic change. For this reason, any form of democracy likely to arise will have an Islamic aspect.

Social movements can either avoid or adapt to take advantage of changes within a political environment. Social movement theory provided a framework to build a

¹⁹² Noah Feldman, *After Jihad: America and the struggle for Islamic Democracy*, New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2004, 222.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

conceptual understanding of Hizbullah, the Muslim Brotherhood, and Hamas. The theory provided an understanding of how Islamist movements form a significant counter force to authoritarian or semi-authoritarian regimes in the region. In addition, the framework provided some insight as to what extent Islamist groups are willing to forego violence to become nonviolent political participants. This understanding and insight was achieved by focusing on three aspects: political opportunities, mobilizing structures, and framing.

When Hamas, Hizbullah, and the Muslim Brotherhood were given an opportunity to participate in the formal government structure, they did not call for complete regime change. The primary goal continued to be reform and the removal of corruption within existing government structures. This demonstrates the willingness to become a functioning component of the political system. The fear of “one person, one vote, one time” does not seem to be a valid argument considering the degree Islamists are willing to participate and challenge existing regimes.

1. Lebanon and Hizbullah

Hizbullah’s institutionalization and desire to maintain its support base led to its participation in municipal and parliamentary elections. This combined with its restraint on violence, prior to the 2006 conflict with Israel, demonstrated the potential to be the example for other Islamist groups. Its actions should capture the attention of the United States and other Western countries interested in spreading democracy and eliminating radical Islamist elements in the region.

Hizbullah sought to become another player in the political system to provide Shi’ites a greater voice in Lebanese government. Hizbullah continues to play an instrumental role in providing social services and other forms of welfare to all Lebanese regardless of religious preference. The next step for Hizbullah, who considers extreme violence part of their repertoire, is to disarm and forego violence becoming a valid part of the system in international eyes.

Hizbullah may remain one of the most feared Islamic activist groups for the time being even though signs of moderation are present. Hizbullah presents a complex situation for Lebanon and the rest of the world. Positive signs of moderation are present outside the conflict with Israel and must be fostered to promote democracy. Hizbullah plays a significant role in filling the civil society void in southern Lebanon. Hizbullah has

created institutions that Lebanese and the Lebanese government depend on daily. As Hizbullah becomes more a service provider and less a militant group, the pressure to become less violent will likely increase.

2. Egypt and the Muslim Brotherhood

The Muslim Brotherhood's willingness to participate in Egypt's political process, indirectly if necessary, suggest there is an opportunity to further institutionalize into the state political system. The Muslim Brotherhood went through a stage of using violence, but returned to non-violence working through grassroots efforts and civil society. While radical factions have emerged and splintered off, the Brotherhood has remained moderate to maintain its support base and advance its goal of reforming Egypt from the bottom-up.

Since 1981, the Brotherhood has maintained its position on non-violence and continues to pressure the Mubarak regime for political reform. The Brotherhood also maintains within its ideology the goal of establishing an Islamic state. Time will tell whether the Muslim Brotherhood seeks democracy or merely the opportunity to control the state. The incentive for complete regime change seems minimal. The Brotherhood's popularity and deep roots in society have institutionalized the movement making it a significant force for change. The Brotherhood continues to promote the need for hospitals and clinics, better working conditions for agriculture and industrial workers, to include minimum wage, and an increase in governmental programs to reduce the growing unemployment problem. The group also promotes democratic aspects to include: free and open elections, freedom of speech, and human rights

The Mubarak regime may continue to reject the Brotherhood's request to become an official political party, however, facts on the ground suggest Egyptians have made a decision to support Muslim Brotherhood members through the ballot box. The Brotherhood remains an active force in the political landscape like it or not. As social movement theory research points out, the ability to conduct or take part in "public meetings; demonstrations; rallies; special-interest associations" allow a movement to shape the political landscape and further democratic processes.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁴ Charles Tilly, "Agendas for Students of Social Movements," in *States, Parties, and Social Movements*, ed., Jack A. Goldstone, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003, 248.

3. Palestinian Authority and Hamas

For Palestinians the 2005 and 2006 elections were better organized and administered to ensure honesty and transparency. The steps taken to ensure open democratic elections may become an institutional norm for Palestinians. Since the 1970s, democracy has been an on-going goal, driven in large part by Palestinian civil society, and a culture of resistance among people living under Israeli occupation.¹⁹⁵

Credit must be given to PA President Mahmoud Abbas and the independent Palestinian Central Election Commission. Without their presence to guarantee an open and honest election, the 2005-2006 results may have turned out differently. While Hamas would gain a number of seats, it is likely that Fatah would have been declared the winner regardless of actual vote. The 2006 election also shows that Israel is no longer the sole democracy among predominantly authoritarian regimes. Palestinians now set an example for other Muslims to participate in open and free democratic elections even under conditions of occupation.¹⁹⁶

Hamas victory followed by its willingness to form a government of national unity with Fatah demonstrated the opportunity for change. A moderate approach to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict may emerge in time. For the moment, Hamas is not likely to moderate to any significant degree. However, its electoral victory has significantly transformed the political landscape halting Fatah's single party dominance. Palestinians cast a deciding vote for change and through the rise of Hamas a more democratic form of governance has the chance to emerge. Open competitive elections are likely to continue; Hamas set precedence for future multiparty elections.

In all three cases, Islamist groups demonstrated a willingness to forego violence to participate within current political structures. The social movement theory framework brought to light the complexity of each group and the complexity of the environment in which they operate. For Hizbullah, the Muslim Brotherhood, and Hamas each face unique circumstances which constrain the degree to which they can moderate and rely on active political participation to advance organization goals. For Hizbullah and Hamas the

¹⁹⁵ Riad Malki, "Beyond Hamas and Fatah," *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 17, no. 3, July 2006, 132.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

biggest obstacle is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For the Muslim Brotherhood it is the willingness of the Mubarak regime to take steps to advance democratic reforms.

B. ISLAMISTS AND U.S. FOREIGN POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Islamist movements in the Middle East are not likely to go away anytime soon. Islamists form the largest organized challenge to existing authoritarian regimes and influence the political landscape. Whether Islamists continue to act as willing participants in the political systems or choose to become more radical an opposition force is important. Also important to consider, Islamists provide civil society institutions necessary to develop lasting democracy.

The United States has the opportunity to influence the Islamist course not necessarily through direct policy but through its reaction to Islamist political gains.¹⁹⁷ For example, Hamas was elected through a free and open democratic election which falls within United States goals for the region. Restricting American aid to the PA because Hamas is in power would likely drive the PA to seek aid from alternate sources like Iran, Saudi Arabia, or Syria. The United States must focus on mitigating the underlying social conditions promoting Islamist support in the first place. Decreasing financial aid and other forms of support is likely to worsen conditions on the ground furthering anti-American sentiment among the Palestinians. Overtime, the United States may also lose the ability to influence a peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In addition to increasing anti-American sentiment, a negative reaction by the United States government may promote hard-liners as opposed to moderates within Islamist movements.¹⁹⁸ Hard-liners are likely to swing the movement towards adopting more violent means to achieve organizational goals. If Islamists shift back to more violent means the region will lose the opportunity for democratic change. United States policy and actions must be carefully crafted to promote positive change and incentives for Islamists to further democratic transition.

¹⁹⁷ Marina Ottaway, "Promoting Democracy after Hamas' Victory," Web Commentary, Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, February 2006, 1, www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=17978 (accessed November 2006).

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 1.

C. AREAS FOR FURTHER INQUIRY

Further study of the social conditions and reasons behind the current resurgence in Islamists support and the conditions which sustain their mobilization is required. Until actions are taken to identify and alleviate underlying social conditions that promote violence the potential for Islamists to rely on radical means will exist. Both Muslims and Islamist movements in the region seem to embrace democratic processes. The end result may not be the American, British, or French form of democracy but that must be decided by Muslims themselves.

The recent Islamist success in local and parliamentary elections can be seen as both increased support for Islamist and a rejection of status quo regimes and political conditions in the Middle East. Elections act as a gauge to measure the willingness of “like-minded people who might take further action if conditions continue to incite their disapproval.”¹⁹⁹ Each case presented in this thesis offers an opportunity to further study the potential for Islamic democracy to develop.

¹⁹⁹ Tilly, 248-249.

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